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E MANHATTAN SERIES

No. 10.

A TRUE ARISTOCRAT.

By MRS. GEORGIE SHELDON,

Author of "Trixy," "Brownie's Triumph," "The Forsaken Bride," "Earl Wayne's Nobility," etc., etc.

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Author of

"Trixy; or, The Shadow of a Crime," "Brownie's Triumph," "The Forsaken Bride," "Earl Wayne's Nobility," "Stella Rosevelt," etc., etc.

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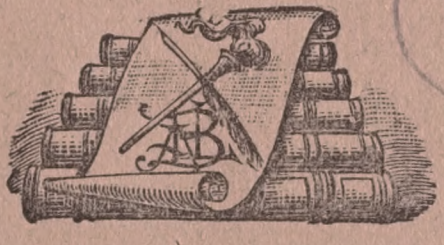

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A TRUE ARISTOCRAT.

CHAPTER I.

TAKEN AT HER WORD.

"HOWARD, you shall never demean yourself in any such way."

"I certainly have no intention of demeaning myself, as you express it, Helen."

"But you have just told me that you intend to marry Cecile Vavasour."

"Yes."

"A *Montgomery* never yet stooped to wed with a *beggar*."

"Helen!"

"I do not care; I *must* talk plainly to you, or you will ruin yourself and disgrace your family. You need not think that you are going to transfix me with that stern look, nor by your dignified, imposing manner. If you marry that girl you will be the talk of our whole set."

The scornful curling of a pair of handsome lips disclosed a set of very white, even teeth belonging to the gentleman addressed by the above remark.

An angry flush mounted to the lady's brow as she noticed it.

"If you persist in your mad folly," she cried, hotly, "you are henceforth no brother of mine; I will not recognize you; I will have nothing more to do with you or *her*."

"Very well."

It was coldly, haughtily spoken.

"'Very well!' Does that mean that you still defy me—that you refuse to heed my wishes in this matter?"

"I have no wish to 'defy' you, Helen; but if you imagine for a moment that I am going to prove myself the traitor I should be if I heeded you in this; if you think I am going back upon my truth, honor, and plighted word, you are very much mistaken. A Montgomery had much better 'wed with a beggar,' as you are pleased to put it, than lower himself to commit the dastardly act which you propose."

"Then I repeat you are henceforth no brother of mine, *and don't you ever dare to bring your beggar-bride into my presence.*"

The place in which the above conversation occurred was a luxurious room in one of those palaces which adorn wide, handsome, aristocratic Fifth avenue; a vast, lofty apartment, pillared with rose marble, hung with velvet, curtained with satin—a room fit for the gods! frescoed and carved in rich and delicate designs, almost equal to the work of a Gibbons and a Vario; lighted by great spaces of French plate-glass; carpeted with the choicest productions of the far East, and ornamented with costly bric-a-brac, statuary, and paintings from almost every country on the globe.

The speakers were in perfect harmony with their surroundings.

One, a tall, willowy, graceful woman of perhaps twenty-five years; a queen of society, a thorough woman of the world; a brilliant, black-haired, black-eyed, rose-tinted brunette, with all the fire, and pride, and haughtiness of a genuine Southerner in her nature, the best Kentucky blood in her veins, and a high-bred grace in every movement.

She looked like a picture as she stood there, tall, straight, haughty, and angry; a passionate gleam in her midnight eyes, a glow of ruddy fire on her olive-tinted cheek; like one of those rich, glowing conceptions of Titian or Murillo stepped down from its frame, in her trailing dress of violet velvet, with its rare and delicate laces, the massive cross of diamonds at her throat, and

the cluster of crimson buds in her hair. She looked like a queen—an offended queen—proud, regal, resentful, but magnificently beautiful.

Such was Helen, only daughter of Fitzroy Charles Somerset Montgomery, a very wealthy Southern gentleman, who was fortunate enough to escape the ravages of war and save the bulk of his property.

He was a descendant of a proud old English family who had been one of the first to settle in the State of Kentucky, who were also intensely aristocratic and exclusive, priding themselves upon their vast wealth, position, and blue blood, but who had gradually died out until only two survived to preserve the dignity and glory of the family name and inherit their almost royal possessions.

Whether it was the "survival of the fittest," and whether their pristine dignity and glory *were* preserved, are facts which will develop themselves in the future.

The other speaker referred to, the companion of this beautiful woman, was an equally handsome man; dark-browed, and darkly-crowned like his sister, with the same tall straight figure, the same clear-cut, high-bred profile, with the same complexion, the same courtly grace and bearing, but possessing a character infinitely superior, although it was plainly to be seen that he was the younger of the two.

A noble man—a manly, chivalrous man was Howard Montgomery, full of fire and energy, of lofty principles and earnest purposes.

He was the only remaining scion to perpetuate the name of a noble house, the pet and darling of his sister, the most admired and courted of all the circle in which they moved, and honored and respected among his business acquaintances for his fair dealing, his unswerving rectitude, and almost princely generosity.

The brother and sister had shared equally in the division of their father's large property, the half of which was a handsome fortune in itself; but Helen had greatly augmented hers by marrying a second with Colonel William Everard Langley, while Howard bade fair to double his shortly by successful business operations.

Both were handsome, cultivated, rich, and both were imbued with an intense pride regarding their birth, family, and position, but—with a difference.

Helen was haughty, arrogant, and conceited on account of her great wealth, and the position it gave her, while Howard's pride consisted in sustaining an unblemished character, scorning a mean act, a dishonorable purpose, and the sacrifice of truth and self-respect.

The subject of their present dispute, and indeed of the whole circle in which they moved just at this time, was Howard Montgomery's engagement to Cecile Vavasour, a lovely girl, who until very recently had moved in the same society, and been a much admired belle in *le beau monde*.

But a sudden and terrible railway accident had deprived her in a moment of time of both parents, thus leaving her not only an orphan, but absolutely friendless and penniless in the world, as she had neither brother, nor sister, nor relative of any sort that she knew of, while it was discovered upon an investigation that Mr. Vavasour was so heavily involved in his business operations that every dollar of the property which he nominally held would not be sufficient to cancel his liabilities.

So beautiful Cecile Vavasour was suddenly hurled from the very pinnacle of affluence into the abyss of beggary; her honors dropped from her like the fairy robes of Cinderella on the stroke of the fatal hour of midnight, and like her she became a creature of yesterday, a bird shorn of its brilliant plumage, an outcast, and considered unfit to mingle longer in the charmed circle where once she had been courted, admired, and flattered.

But the knowledge of her poverty, when broken to her, scarcely seemed to move her.

It was nothing when compared to the loss of her father and mother, who had made her their idol, and thus far on life's journey removed every obstacle from her pathway.

She was only seventeen, and a trusting, clinging little creature. She had never known a want or a wish un-

gratified; her whole life had been like an enchanted idyl, and poverty was but an empty word, a meaningless sound to her.

She had met Howard Montgomery more than a year previous. For six months she had been engaged to him, loving him with all the fervor of a first strong attachment, and believing him to be just what he was, a grand, noble, incorruptible man.

Now when her great trouble came upon her she had of course turned to him, trusting him, confiding in him, leaning upon him as she believed she had a right to do—as a woman *should* do, and feel, toward the man whom she was to marry.

It had never occurred to her that the change in her prospects could make any difference either in his feelings or those of his many friends.

What mattered a little money?

If she had none, Howard was rich, and as his wife she would never want for anything in the future any more than she had in the past. She believed he would do by her as she would have done by him had their positions been reversed; so she gave not a troubled thought to her poverty, although she was nearly heart-broken over the sad and tragic end of her parents.

But however she may have regarded it, poor Cecile's misfortune in losing all her money did make a vast difference in the feelings of her "dear five hundred friends;" and the crash, when it came, crushed out almost every spark of love, admiration and friendship which they had ever entertained, or professed to entertain for her.

"How dreadful!" they cried, with faces of dismay. "Poor child, what *will* she do? Of *course* Howard Montgomery will never marry her *now*—it would be *such a mesalliance*," and bright eyes grew brighter, hopeless hearts became lighter, as calculating mammas and scheming maidens began to feel that the handsome aristocratic young Southerner might turn his attention in another direction now.

To be sure the fair unfortunate was just as pretty, just as pure, just as intellectual and accomplished as she had

ever been; but the almighty dollar—that golden god who hitherto had paved her pathway with pleasure, and surrounded her life with a halo of glory—had proved fickle, taken unto himself wings and flown away, and fortune's petted darling was found to be only a thing of common clay after all.

Helen Langley, who should have been most sympathetic, most tender, comforting and considerate, was bitterest of all.

Poverty was the worst, the unpardonable sin of all in her catalogue of crimes, and Cecile, perforce, had become a sinner past all forgiveness or absolution.

For a moment or two after she had uttered that last bitter, passionate sentence, her brother stood regarding her with a stern, searching look in his dark eyes; then his handsome lips slowly curled again.

"Helen," he began, coldly, but with a decision which there could be no mistaking, "if you were a man, I would not have given you breathing space after those last odious words; but since you are a woman, and—my sister, I suppose I must endure them and let you go unscathed. Let me tell you, however, that you have greatly mistaken my character, if you imagine that I am going to prove recreant to my vows, simply because the girl I love has become the victim of misfortune. I have won her affections; I have wooed her from the beginning with the intention of marrying her; and, putting myself and my love for her entirely out of the question, do you suppose I am going to break her heart now, simply because her fortune has taken wings? What was her money to me? Did you think it was simply that I wanted when I asked Mr. Vavasour to give me his daughter? Have I not enough and more than enough? Her troubles have not changed her nature, except to make her cling to me more fondly, and to love me more devotedly than before. She is the same pure, true-hearted girl that she has always been, and whom you have professed so to admire and love. Without me she would be utterly friendless and desolate, and this change in her circumstances will not make the slightest difference with my intentions regarding her."

"You are determined, then—you will not listen to reason—you are bound to marry her!" Mrs. Langley cried, with a flash of anger in her eyes.

"Most certainly I shall marry Cecile Vavasour. I have never thought of such a thing as breaking my engagement with her until you proposed it to me to-day."

"Where is your pride?" she cried, scornfully.

"Good Heavens, Helen! have you no consideration for *me?* Do you think it would cost *me* nothing to give up my promised wife, and do you think I can cast her aside like a worn-out garment? I tell you my whole life would be blighted, all my hopes crushed—destroyed, if anything should happen to alienate Cecile's affections from me. She is dearer to me than all the world besides; name, fortune, position would be nothing without her," he returned, with an earnestness which proved the truth of his words beyond a doubt.

"You are too sentimental for anything, Howard," Mrs. Langley retorted, impatiently.

"Call it what you will—I do not care; but you cannot move me a hair's breadth. I shall use all my eloquence, too, to hasten our marriage, for the poor child will have no home when her father's creditors are satisfied, save the one I shall offer her."

"Well, Howard Montgomery, you know what I have said," Mrs. Col. Langley retorted, in icy tones, her face white and set as that of a marble statue.

"Yes, Helen, and if such is your verdict—that I am to be no longer regarded as your brother—that you henceforth ostracize me from your heart and home—so it must remain, I suppose, although it is a very unjust and cruel one," the young man returned, sadly, adding, with a slight quiver in his under lip: "You and I are all that are left of our father's family, and it will be very hard to walk in separate paths when all our lives we have been so united. But if you will allow a false pride to so warp your affection and sympathies, and build this barrier between us, I cannot feel that I am in any way responsible. I will not shame my manhood—I will not

do violence to my love, and spoil both my life and Cecile's, even though my only sister demands it."

"Howard, you are an incorrigible fool!" Helen Langley cried, angrily, and thrown into a white heat of passion by his words.

Howard Montgomery stepped forward to the table near them, and took his hat.

His fine face had grown very pale, and the welt of flesh which lay between his teeth was nearly bitten through with the effort he made to restrain himself, and there was a dangerous gleam in his eyes.

His sister had not inherited all the fire of her race by any means, nor as much of their self-control either, as would have been well for her.

"That is something that I can allow *no* one to say to me with impunity," he returned, in an inflexible tone. "Good-morning and good-by, Helen."

Without waiting for any reply, and before his sister could recover from her surprise enough to realize what she had done, and that she was being taken literally at her word, he had left the room and the house.

CHAPTER II.

PLANNING FOR THEIR FUTURE.

HOWARD MONTGOMERY went directly from Col. Langley's elegant residence to the no less luxurious abode of his affianced wife—Cecile Vavasour.

Out of respect and sympathy for the young girl's deep trouble, her father's creditors had postponed the despoiling of her beautiful home as long as possible.

But it could not be delayed much longer, and her lover knew it—knew that the aristocratic residence, with all its wealth of adornment, must come under the relentless hammer of the auctioneer.

He had therefore determined to urge their immediate marriage, that Cecile might at once be surrounded by his love and protection, and that she need know no change in her mode of life; and it was the declaration of this determination to his sister, the elegant and fastidious Mrs. Langley, which had caused the disagreement recorded in the preceding chapter.

Howard found his betrothed sitting, sad and alone, in her boudoir, her face pale and wistful, her air weary and dejected.

As the door opened and he entered, she sprang to meet him, with a glad cry, her countenance lighting up with a glow of tenderness that told him at once of whom she had been thinking, and how entirely her heart was his.

How shall I describe Cecil Vavasour?

How can I do justice to her delicate beauty—her wondrous loveliness?

She was slight of figure, of medium height, and most exquisitely formed.

Her features were delicate, her complexion of remark-

able clearness and brilliancy; her eyes were deeply, darkly, beautifully blue, and fringed with lashes a shade darker than the fluffy, golden hair which crowned her small head, and seemed, as one has expressed it, like "woven sunshine," so brightly did it gleam with every graceful movement. Her cheeks were round and daintily tinted, her lips seemed only for smiles and kisses, and the prettiest and most bewitching of dimples nestled in their corners.

But above and beyond all this mere outward beauty there was something so pure, and innocent, and sweet about the fair young girl's nature that every heart was won before it was aware of the fact; her loveliness, her guileless nature, and her *gold* brought scores of admirers to her feet, and her friends were numbered by the legion.

But of how little real value all this admiration and friendship was she began to realize only when she was left alone, poor and desolate, in the world.

Cecil Vavasour was as unconscious as a child of her loveliness; or, if not wholly unconscious of it, she at least was not vain. She could not help knowing that she was beautiful—she had been told of it too often not to realize it—she had smiled back at her own exquisite reflection in her mirror time after time, but it was only with a feeling of gladness and pleasure, such as she would have experienced on looking at beautiful flowers, or in beholding some lovely work of art that gave delight both to herself and others.

There was not a spark of vanity or frivolty in her nature.

Some people regarded her with indulgent smiles, calling her a pretty plaything—a doll—something to be prettily dressed, petted, and caressed, and taken about for show; but as for her usefulness, her character, and intellect, they were doubtful if anything could be said in her favor; and when at length her sad misfortunes overtook her, her wide circle of friends shrugged their aristocratic shoulders, smiled with indolent compassion, and murmured with indifferent sympathy.

"What a pity that she must lose fortune, too—a baby like that can never take care of herself, and of course

Howard Montgomery, with his splendid talents and his immense wealth, will never marry a nonentity."

Howard Montgomery knew her differently, although even he did not realize until years after the strength of character, the energy and steadfastness of purpose which lay latent beneath her childish beauty, her sweet, clinging, gentle ways.

He was six years her senior, and he had met many lovely women during the years that he had spent in society, but no one had ever so impressed him with truth, purity, and artlessness as Cecile Vavasour had done.

She had twined herself at once about his heart with her frank, confiding manner, and he always turned from the vain and fashionable belles, who hovered about him with such inviting admiration, to this fresh, sweet girl, with a sense of rest and refreshment that charmed and won him.

Every hour spent in her society only served to bind him more closely to her, and he soon learned that that pretty shining head contained more of wisdom and knowledge than many an older person possessed.

She was light-hearted and gay, and while she dearly loved society and excitement, yet a portion of every day was given to thorough, systematic study.

"Oh, Howard!" she cried, as she went forward to meet him now, "the day has seemed like a month; I am so glad you have come!" and she clasped her two small white hands about his arm, and clung to him in a way that told him how very dreary she had been.

He looked down upon her very fondly; she seemed doubly fair to him in her dusky robes which contrasted so vividly with her clear, pure complexion, and with the subdued, pensive air which had hung about her ever since the death of her parents.

"My darling, I know that you have been lonely, and I should have been here earlier had I not been planning some way to make your life less sad," he replied, tenderly, and folding his strong arm about her light figure, he led her to a sofa and drew her down to a seat beside him.

"You were planning something for me, Howard?" she asked, nestling her bright head against his shoulder.

"Yes, Cecile, I have been trying to arrange for, and I have now come to consult with you about our immediate marriage."

"Oh! Howard, you do not mean that, and papa and mamma only just laid away in Greenwood!" the young girl cried, in a pained tone, while a burning blush suffused her face and lost itself among the feathery gold that lay low upon her forehead.

Tears sprang to her eyes and a grieved look settled about her mouth.

How could she bear to think or talk of her own happiness while her dear ones lay so cold and silent in their newly made graves? It seemed almost like sacrilege to her.

Howard Montgomery drew her yet closer to him.

"Dearest," he said, gravely, "I know that you trust me fully, and you will know that whatever I plan for you will be according to my best judgment. You must not think me unkind if I talk business to you for a little while, and tell you just how affairs stand. You already know something of the financial trouble that has swept away your father's property, and now it becomes necessary that his creditors should be satisfied. They have considerately waited several weeks already, feeling a delicacy about disturbing you in your grief; but, Cecile, this great house is no place for you with only servants for companions."

"I know it is not, Howard, and I can never tell you how very lonely I have been; I would have been glad to go away before if—if there had been any place for me to go," she said sadly, and Howard Montgomery's face grew hot with shame and anger, that his sister should not have come forward at this trying time, and offered the sympathy and shelter which this poor lonely girl so much needed.

"There will be no trouble about that in the future," he answered, as he brushed back the soft locks from her forehead and touched it gently with his lips, "and you

shall live just where you prefer. I will do just as you say about the house—if you will be happier here than anywhere else, I will purchase it and all it contains, and it shall be your home still. But—it must be mine, too; your own good judgment will tell you that I could not do this for you except under the protection of my name; and Cecile, I *know* that your father and mother would approve. You have no friends to whom you can go for a home; you are not fitted to take care of yourself; you are my promised wife; you intend to marry me sometime; why postpone the event when we shall both be happier together? and I'm sure *you* do not care any more than I what the *world* may say regarding the proper period for isolation and mourning."

"No, Howard," Cecile answered, thoughtfully, but with downcast eyes and flushed cheeks, "whatever you might deem right and proper for me, and my own conscience approved, I should not ask the world to decide for me."

"Then, dear, may I ask you to waive your prerogative, and let *me* name the day for our marriage?" her lover asked, smiling.

Cecile sat erect, and turning to him with something of solemnity in her manner, laid her hands upon his shoulders, and raising her earnest eyes to his, said:

"Howard, I am very young—six years younger than you. I have never been taught to depend upon myself, hardly to choose for myself upon any important question; I do not even feel that my education is complete; I have much to learn yet, and sometimes I think that my character has not developed fully, I have such strange thoughts, aspirations and feelings. You are far beyond me in intellect, education and years, and I am afraid——"

"Afraid of what, my darling?" the young man asked very tenderly, as she faltered.

"Afraid that as I am now I am not quite fitted to become your constant companion," she answered, leaning back upon his shoulder with a sigh; "I love you—with my whole heart I love you, Howard—in *that* I

could never change; but I fear sometimes that I cannot keep pace with you, and—and *I could not bear* that you should be disappointed in me. I had hoped that the year we were to have waited would help me to grow stronger in character, more mature and more womanly, and more companionable for you, who are so much wiser than I."

"And why cannot you mature and develop—why cannot you achieve all that you wish as my wife?" her lover asked, half wondering, half amused at this new phase of her character, this sweet, thoughtful gravity, in which she was very lovely.

"I should try just as hard, certainly, only——"

Cecile's confusion, as she hesitated and glanced shyly up at him, was very charming.

"Only what?"

She hid her eyes upon her breast, as if half ashamed to tell him her doubt.

"Only if I should not succeed, and you should be disappointed in me after all, there would be no help for you—you would be obliged to put up with me all your life."

Howard Montgomery's handsome face gleamed with amusement at the confession, but it was very fond and tender withal, as he wound both his arms about the lithe black-robed figure, and drew her almost convulsively to his breast.

"Oh, my devoted darling! to think that you should plan to put yourself upon probation like that for me! Did I not tell you that I loved you, and did you suppose that it would be possible for me to change any more than for you? I want you just as you are; I cannot wait for what you will be by and by. I had no idea that you were thinking so deeply, so gravely—that your aspirations were so high. I shall have to look after my own laurels, or you will be outstripping me yet, and then the disappointment will be reversed. But, Cecile, if these are all your objections, we will be married to-morrow."

"Oh, no! not to-morrow," she interrupted, earnestly, yet half smiling; "to-morrow will be Friday, and al-

though I am not superstitious generally, I do not think I would quite like Friday to be my wedding-day."

"I had not thought of its being Friday to-morrow," Howard answered, with luminous eyes, as he saw that she was yielding; "but will your ladyship object to Saturday?

"Really, Cecile," he added, as he saw the blood rush in a torrent to her blue-veined temples, "something will have to be done about the house next week."

Cecile's beautiful eyes wandered about the lovely room in which they were sitting, and a wistful expression stole into them. It was hard to think that all those treasures that had been so dear to her must be sold and scattered in every direction.

She sighed heavily; then looking up into her lover's face she said, quietly, but with lips that quivered slightly:

"Howard, it shall be just as you say."

"Bless you, my own, you have taken a heavy burden off my heart. It shall be Saturday, at eleven, then, and we will be married here in your own home very quietly, with only a few of our real friends to witness the ceremony—you shall choose who they shall be, Cecile," Howard said, feeling much relieved to have gained her consent so readily.

"They will indeed be very few, Howard, and I shall have little difficulty in naming them," Cecile answered, lifting her head somewhat proudly.

"Do you suppose," she continued, as she met her lover's questioning glance, "that I do not realize the difference between Cecile Vavasour of to-day and a month ago? Why, Howard, I have received less than a dozen letters of condolence, and no one save Helen and dear Mrs. Carrol, Emmie and Hattie, has come to sympathize with me in all my trouble. I know that it is because I have lost fortune with father and mother, but the loss of such friends cannot harm me; they are not worthy the name, and nothing could make me wholly wretched while you are true to me."

"Cecile, you did not doubt me—you did not fear that

I would be untrue?" Howard asked, bending to look into her eyes.

He had winced as she spoke his sister's name, but he would not hurt her by telling her of her fierce opposition to their marriage.

"No, Howard, I did not doubt you. I believed you would be just as true to me as I knew I should be to you if our circumstances were reversed," she answered, confidently.

"Thank you, my darling, for your trust in me. I could not be false to you under any circumstances; but we will not mind the world. While we have each other we can be happy. Now tell me, dear, what I shall do about the house? Shall I buy it? Would you still like to live here?"

A slight shiver disturbed Cecile for a moment, then she said, somewhat sadly:

"Howard, it has been my home only a comparatively short time—two or three years. It is beautiful, and I have been very happy here; but it is so large, and it seems so dreary without papa and mamma, that I should like to have a smaller, cozier home somewhere; or if we could go away for a while, I should like it still better."

"That would suit me to a charm, Cecile. I have been longing for a season of travel, and so, with your approval, we shall take a run over Europe, get away from all wearisome congratulations, visitings, etc., and be by ourselves for awhile," Howard answered, eagerly, seizing upon the idea in order to take her away from all gossip and the ill-nature of his sister, who he knew would bitterly resent his marriage, and make his young wife very unhappy.

"Oh, Howard, that will be so delightful! I have been hungering for Europe ever since I was a child," the fair girl cried, almost joyfully.

"Well, dear, now that I have settled that knotty question, I have a few directions to give you, and then I must leave you until evening."

He took a package of blank cards from his pocket as he spoke, asked for pens and ink, and then requested her to write the word "Sold" upon a portion of them, while he did the same upon the remainder.

After this was done they tied twine through them, and then he made her go over the house with him, and choose from among its many treasures such articles as she would like to retain, attaching a card to each as they went.

It was a hard task—a sad farewell to her beautiful home; but Cecile bore it bravely, and made her selections with a wisdom and thoughtfulness which surprised her lover not a little.

This ended he left her for awhile, for he had much to accomplish before the hour set for the marriage on Saturday morning.

CHAPTER III.

"WHO ARE YOU?"

FRIDAY morning Cecile went out into the beautiful grounds in the rear of the Vavasour mansion for a little ramble.

The poor child was lonely and sad, and not a little awed in view of the important event which was so soon to change her whole life.

She had been left almost entirely to herself since the death of her parents, her many acquaintances having dropped her entirely since learning of her changed circumstances, while the few who remained true to their professed friendship did not feel at liberty to intrude themselves upon her lest they should be regarded as curious.

Mrs. Carrol and her two kind-hearted girls alone had come to her with words of sympathy and cheer. A few had written stereotyped letters of condolence, and flattered themselves that their duty was done.

"Of course," they reasoned in the most comfortable manner imaginable, "Helen Langley will do the proper thing, and take the poor orphan into her family until some suitable arrangement can be made for her."

But Helen Langley had very different ideas regarding the "poor orphan," and she meant to carry them out if it was in her power to do so.

She had made one call upon Cecile after the terrible blow which had so bereaved her; she had attended the funeral of Mr. and Mrs. Vavasour, sat by the solitary mourner's side, and had been most kind and affectionate —indeed all that a prospective sister-in-law could be at that time.

She had afterward even invited her to go home with

her, and stay until she could recover in a measure from the fearful shock that she had received; but Cecile preferred to hide her bitter grief in the solitude of her own home, dismal and lonely though it might be, and so declined Mrs. Langley's pressing invitation, for the present.

But all this was before the terrible news of her poverty was made public; that wrought at once a complete revolution in the feelings and sympathy which had before been showered upon her.

She had wondered why Mrs. Langley had not been to see her since; but she knew that she was very busy in the fashionable life she was leading, and so tried to excuse her neglect in that way; and she was too proud to complain to Howard of his sister's remissness, and so bore her pain and loneliness in silence.

But she was destined soon to learn Mrs. Langley's true character, for that lady was even then on her way to see what influence she could have upon the "silly poverty-stricken girl," to prevent her from marrying her brother.

"Of course she will come to me now," Cecile mused, as she walked thoughtfully back and forth under the arching trees that shaded the graveled walk. "Howard will tell her that we are to be married immediately, and it would not be kind for her not to come to help and advise me about what I shall need."

She reached the end of the walk and turned to retrace her steps, and, looking up, saw Mrs. Langley approaching.

She had inquired for Cecile of the servant who answered her ring, and been told that she was walking in the grounds.

"Do not call her; I will go to her," she replied, preferring to have the interview occur where there was no danger of its being overheard.

Cecile's beautiful face brightened and flushed with pleasure as she hastened forward to meet her; but the smile froze on her lips, and her heart dropped like lead in her bosom, as she looked into that cold, haughty face, met the frigid glance of those great black eyes, and noted the scornful curve of her proud lips.

"Miss Vavasour," she began, almost before Cecile's words of greeting were uttered, and in a tone so chill and icy that it made the young girl shiver, "I learned yesterday that your misfortunes will compel you to leave your beautiful home, and I felt it to be my duty to come and make you a little farewell visit. How unfortunate that you are obliged to give up all this luxury!" the proud woman continued, glancing around the lovely grounds; "but I trust you will find kind friends and a pleasant home. Where are you going?"

The effrontery of the woman was beyond description.

Cecile looked up at her with wondering eyes, and blushed painfully, a feeling of resentment for a moment stirring her heart.

Then it vanished, for she thought that Howard had probably had no opportunity to tell her of their approaching marriage, and she was too sweet and gentle to cherish ill-will long toward any one.

Perhaps she had heard that she was obliged to go away, and thought she might be going to visit some of her former friends for awhile; she might even be offended because she did not go to her instead, and that was why she had changed so toward her.

But of course it would be all right when she knew she was so soon to become her sister—she would receive her kindly then. It was too bad that Howard had not told her, and they were to be married to-morrow, and she resolved to tell her herself.

"Yes, I expect I shall find very kind friends," she answered, with sweet shyness, the beautiful flush still on her cheek, and going nearer to the proud woman. "As for the pleasant home," she added, "that will have to wait a little, but it will come in time, I suppose. Helen—I hoped Howard would be the first to tell you, but I suppose he has not had time to go to you; he wishes—we have decided—to be married right away and travel for awhile."

Mrs. Langley caught her breath at this announcement.

Howard had been there, then, and settled everything.

She had intended coming to see Cecile immediately after her interview with her brother yesterday, and work upon her feelings in such a way that she would refuse to accede to his request; but callers had prevented, and she had been obliged to put off her visit until to-day.

She turned a look of well-feigned astonishment upon the fair girl.

"Going to be married right away?" she repeated, as if this was the first she had heard of it.

"Yes; Howard thought it best; I am so alone, and"—with a little quiver of her sweet lips—"almost friendless; and besides, you know I am very poor now," she concluded, with a half-appealing, half-deprecatory look into the hard, handsome face of her companion.

"Yes, I know," was the freezing reply, "and that is why I am so much astonished at your entertaining the thought of marrying my brother. Of course, you have had neither time nor *money* to procure a suitable trousseau."

Cecile looked troubled, bewildered; not because she had no suitable trousseau, but because of the way in which Mrs. Langley had received her announcement.

"That does not matter," she said with a sigh; "waiting would not bring me any money, and I do not care for a trousseau. I can wear nothing but black for a long time, you know, and as we shall go away immediately it will make no difference."

"Of course you can wear nothing but black for a long time," said Mrs. Langley, impatiently; "and who ever heard of such a thing as being married during a season of mourning? I am surprised at you, Cecile; I am surprised that Howard had not more sense than to suggest such a thing."

"Do you think it would be so very improper?" Cecile asked, gravely, and fixing her earnest eyes upon Mrs. Langley.

"Certainly it would be very unconventional, very improper," she answered decidedly, and hoping that Cecile's fear of public opinion would help her to carry her point.

But she soon discovered her mistake.

"Howard said he did not care what people might say, and I'm sure *I* do not. It is rather an unusual case, Helen; I have no one to take care of me now, and I am afraid that I could not take care of myself, brought up as I have been, so there seems nothing else for me to do; and as Howard wishes it, and I belong to him, I am content to let it be so," Cecile said, thoughtfully, but still studying the face opposite her.

"Then you are going to marry Howard simply to be *taken care* of—simply because he has plenty of money, and can give you all the luxuries to which you have been accustomed all your life and would find it disagreeable and inconvenient to do without in the future! That is a laudable motive, truly," Helen Langley retorted, a sneer curling her red lips, her eyes blazing angrily upon the pretty speaker.

A change passed over Cecile's face.

It grew white and pained, but her small, sweet lips all at once settled into firmer lines than were their wont; her eyes deepened, and the look which rested upon Mrs. Langley's face was clear, steady, and unfaltering.

She realized now why Helen had come to her and treated her in such a disagreeable way.

She did not wish her to marry her brother; she was determined that she should not, now that she was no longer an heiress, and it was beyond her power to swell his fortune to even greater magnitude than it now possessed.

She understood now her coldness and neglect, her scorn, sneers, and haughty bearing, and although it wounded her sensitive heart to the core, yet she could but experience a feeling of contempt for one who would be so influenced by circumstances that were entirely beyond her control, and could in no way affect her character or worth.

She knew that she was just as worthy to-day of Howard Montgomery as she had ever been, that his life would be ruined and her own rendered utterly desolate,

if she should yield to this heartless woman's will and refuse to marry him, and—*she did not mean to do it!*

She paused for a full minute, her eyes fixed steadily upon Mrs. Langley's, before she replied; then she said, with a quiet dignity which Helen had never seen in her before, and of which she had not thought her capable:

"No, Mrs. Langley, I am going to marry Mr. Montgomery because—*I love him.*"

Mrs. Langley was somewhat taken aback at this reply: not so much by the words as the manner in which they were spoken.

It told her that there was after all a decision about the girl that she had not thought she possessed, and her clear, ringing tones, her simple but conclusive declaration showed that the matter, at least in her own mind, was settled beyond recall.

It angered her, too, to have that slight, delicate girl, who had always seemed but little more than a child to her—a lump of wax to be molded into any form at her own or her brother's will, stand there so quietly, and say so decidedly, "I *am going* to marry Mr. Montgomery because I love him."

It was as if, notwithstanding her poverty, dependence, and friendlessness, the simple fact of her love for him made her worthy to be his wife.

Helen's face grew dark as she replied:

"Have you no consideration for him? Think of the difference in your positions now—Howard is rich, and might take his choice of the most eligible young ladies in New York, while you have lost all; you have nothing."

Cecile's lips curled slightly.

"Helen, you do not wish me to marry Howard," she said, quietly.

"No, I do not," Mrs. Langley returned, hotly.

"Just because I have lost all my money! How would it be had it happened that our positions were reversed? If he had lost *his* property, and I, still having plenty, desired to hold him to his engagement?"

"It is not a supposable case," Mrs. Langley answered, coldly, but she colored vividly nevertheless.

"You are very unreasonable, Helen; you say I have no consideration for Howard, while it is *you* who do not consider. I know that he loves me as a man should love the woman who is to be his wife, and that his happiness, as well as my own, would be wrecked if I refused to marry him now. I know that his fortune is ample; that he does not *need* to increase it by wedding an eligible *parti*. I know that he never even thought of that when he asked me to become his wife, and so I shall never do him the wrong which you have come here to urge me to do. I have given him my promise and I shall abide by it," Cecile said, gently, but very firmly.

Mrs. Langley bit her lips fiercely.

"But, Cecile, do you know what the world will say?" she asked, thinking it best to try a different line of argument.

"No," the young bride-elect returned somewhat disdainfully, "and it will not matter to me what it says, so that Howard is satisfied with me."

"Well, it matters to me," Mrs. Langley answered, losing all patience. "*I* have some regard for the speech of people if *you* have not. I cannot see Howard about to commit such folly without making an effort to save him. It is not proper that he should marry you, now that you have lost your position in the social world—a Montgomery—and we are all very proud and aristocratic—never yet married into a poor family. It will injure his social standing, it will injure his business prospects, and he will be the talk of his whole circle of acquaintances. Besides this, you are many years younger than he, and it is more fitting that he should choose some one more mature—you are but a child in years and character—he will soon tire of you when he begins to realize that you are too simple-minded to be a congenial companion for him; then, I think, your silly notions about love will not amount to much. The Montgomerys have always been wealthy and occupied the highest possible position in social life, and I *will not* have Howard lose caste by stooping to wed a girl like you, without a dollar to her name. Cecile Vavasour, you must give up my brother."

Cecile's face was no longer white and sad.

A bright red spot burned on either cheek, and a strangely brilliant light had shot into her eyes during these last bitterly-spoken sentences, while her slender form seemed to have grown at least two inches taller.

"Mrs. Langley," she said, in icy but perfectly lady-like tones, "while I do not forget that you belong to the vaunted Montgomery race, *you* will please remember that *I* am a *Vavasour*, and if I have lost my money—and money, in my opinion, does not constitute the true aristocrat, as your words seem to imply—I have, *at least*, as blue blood in my veins as yourself. Were you any other than Howard's sister, I should not trouble myself to reply to the insulting language which you have just heaped upon me. I do not mean to be reminded by you—as you seem to take delight in doing—that I have lost my property; I *know* that I am wretchedly poor to-day, but I have not lost my good name, nor my self-respect, nor my love for your brother, and with these still untarnished, I shall give myself into his keeping as his wife, without a fear for the future. You claim that a Montgomery never yet married into a poor family; that is a boast from which I think I could gain very little real satisfaction, and now, for once, it seems there will have to be an exception to the rule, and it remains to be seen whether the result will prove disastrous or not. It is true that I am six years younger than your brother, and that I am not very mature in my appearance, but every year will, I trust, serve to remedy that objection, and if he is content I cannot fail to be. As for his tiring of me, Helen," Cecile said, a tender smile wreathing her beautiful lips, "he will *never* do that—my love for him is too deep, and pure, and absorbing for me not to put forth every effort to *keep* the grand and noble heart that I have won."

"You are Howard's sister," she went on, a wistful expression for an instant coming into her eyes, "and I would have been glad to have our relations continue friendly; but, Mrs. Langley, let me say once for all, that I cannot submit to any such system of browbeating and

arrogance as you have instituted to-day. To-morrow I become your brother's wife, and it will rest with you whether our relations in the future are amicable or not. Good morning."

And before the astonished woman could recover from her surprise, Cecile had turned, and, speeding down the path, was half way to the house before she could recover her breath.

Mrs. Langley watched her until she disappeared within the door, noting her graceful bearing, her slender, perfect form, and her firm, proud step.

She had not half had her say out, but it could not be helped now; Cecile's calm, quiet dignity, her decisive words, and her dauntless manner had taken her entirely by surprise.

"I thought she was but a pretty doll—a vain, silly, empty-pated girl, but I was never more mistaken in my life," she muttered to herself; "she has the fire and spirit of ten ordinary girls, although she is usually so quit and gentle. What a pity she has lost everything—I could find no fault with her but for that."

With these observations she returned to her carriage, which was waiting, for the last time, for her, before the stately mansion of the Vavasours.

As she was upon the point of entering it, a swarthy hand was thrust before her, and a plaintive voice said:

"Please, missis, give me a dime, I'm powerful hungry."

She turned and found a tall, finely-formed woman of color—evidently an octoroon—standing by her side.

She was apparently about fifty years of age, and she must have been very handsome when she was young, for the remnant of a grand beauty yet lingered upon her clear-cut, regular, though sharpened features.

She was poorly, though neatly dressed in a dark clean print, with a white handkerchief crossed upon her bosom, after the fashion of the colored people of the South. Her abundant hair, somewhat wavy, but smooth and glossy as polished jet, was twined in a massive coil at the back of her head; a finely-shaped head it was, too, with a broad, intellectual forehead, such as is seldom seen in one of

her race. Her eyes were large but very expressive, and there was a peculiar mournfulness in them just now, as she held out her hand for the paltry sum she had craved to buy bread to satisfy the demands of hunger.

As Helen Langley turned to see who was begging of her the woman fell back as if some unseen person had struck her a blow, and uttered a low cry of surprise, that was at the same time half a moan of terror, her face blanching to a sickly yellow.

Something in her intensely black eyes, her clear-cut, regular features, and in the stately bearing of the woman, arrested Helen's attention—nay more, it *startled* her!

"Who are you?" she asked, with a strange tightening about the muscles of her throat.

"A poor woman who is hungry, missis," the creature returned with averted face, but evidently struggling with some inward emotion.

"What is your name?"

"Selma," was the brief reply.

"Selma? Selma what?" and the proud woman of fashion bent nearer, awaiting her answer with strange eagerness, the color forsaking her cheeks, a half-wondering, half-frightened look in her eyes.

The woman glanced up at her—a quick, earnest, searching glance.

"Nothing but Selma," she said sullenly, although she was trembling visibly.

"Where were you raised? Were you born in Kentucky?" sharply demanded Mrs. Langley, while she clutched at the strings of her hat as if they choked her.

The woman's lips twitched nervously, her face was ghastly pale, and she folded her arms across her breast as if to quell the fierce throbbing of her heart, which even stirred the spotless kerchief folded over it, as she answered in husky tones:

"Kentucky! Kentucky!"

The words were like a moan of pain; then lifting her proud head with a sort of pitiful defiance, she continued:

"Never mind, missis, where I was raised. I'm only

Selma—wandering Selma, with no friends, no home, nothing. Give me some money, honey, please. I's powerful hungry; you're rich, you're like a queen, so grand, so beautiful." Her eyes lighted with wonderful brilliancy as she went on: "*You* are never hungry, *you* never want for anything. Ah, honey, pray God you never may. You could not bear it—you, so like a delicate flower; but—please, missis, one dime."

"Thank'ee, honey," she concluded, as Helen dropped a piece of silver in her outstretched palm, and then turned away with blanching lips, a look of terror in her eyes, and with a wildly beating heart she groped her way blindly into her carriage and sank breathless among its luxurious cushions and was driven away, while the poor creature who had begged from her stood looking after her with heaving breast, tightly clenched hands, and a face that was almost convulsed with anguish.

Helen Langley, on reaching her home, went directly to her bedroom, shut and locked the door, and then threw back her vail and looked in the glass.

"I feel—yes, and I *look* as if I had seen a *ghost*, and *I believe I have!*" she faltered, with lips that still were colorless.

CHAPTER IV.

MARRIED.

CECILE was cut to the very heart from her interview with Mrs. Langley. She was mortified, grieved, angry. But a certain pride and dignity of which she herself had not been aware of possessing until now sustained her, and she resolved that she would not allow that woman's insolence and arrogance to make her miserable.

All day long, however, the scene of the morning remained in her mind, and the more she thought of it the more she despised Helen for the part she had played in it; and yet she felt quite sure she would bend all her energies, and use all her influence, to persuade Howard to relinquish all idea of marriage with her.

"She will not succeed," she said to herself, with a quiet smile of trust, as she sat in the fading light at the close of the day, waiting for her lover to come. "Howard is as true as truth itself, and he will never be influenced by her, and I shall do as he wishes and my own heart dictates. For once," and she could not repress a smile of scornful amusement at the thought, "'a Montgomery' will marry a 'poor girl,' and I will yet show Helen Langley that one of her proud race will be prouder of the fact—prouder to acknowledge *me*, who have not a dollar to bring him, as his wife, than if I was the possessor of millions."

The fair face of the young bride-elect had seemed to change since morning.

There was a deeper, more thoughtful look in her dark-blue eyes—there were firmer, graver lines about her sweet mouth; indeed, her whole countenance had assumed a more mature expression, while there was a

dignity in her manner and carriage that she had never possessed before; she was beginning to be conscious that life held some stern realities, and that it would require much of decision and independence to meet and conquer them.

She resolved not to mention the fact of Helen's visit, and its object, to Howard when he came. She knew it would make him both indignant and unhappy, and do her no good beyond arousing his sympathy for her; and unless he should see fit to mention his sister's objections to her first, he should never know of the ordeal to which she had been subjected that day.

But Howard said nothing; he had been very busy all day arranging with Mr. Vavasour's creditor's regarding the articles that he wished reserved for Cecile, while his own business also had demanded much attention.

He had sent a note that morning to Mrs. Langley, telling her of his intentions, and requesting her presence at the ceremony on Saturday, at eleven. He had also mentioned that he and his bride would sail for Europe the week following.

Helen did not receive this note until after her return from her visit to Cecile, and then all the notice she took of it was to cast it angrily into the fire, and vow vengeance upon the poor, inoffensive girl, if ever the opportunity should occur.

Howard very thoughtfully made arrangements with Mrs. Carrol and her two daughters, of whom Cecile had spoken, to go to her the night before the wedding, and remain until it was over, that she might not feel so utterly alone, and might have some one to counsel and assist her in the necessary preparations for the event.

Saturday—a bright, glad morning in the last of May—a very small, select company gathered in the great parlors of the Vavasour mansion to witness the ceremony that was to make Cecile Vavasour the wife of Howard Montgomery.

Very fair and beautiful the young girl looked, as she entered the room a few minutes past eleven, leaning on the arm of her manly lover.

Her dress was exquisitely simple and lovely, composed of white crepe, with no trimming save full ruchings of the material.

Her veil, which completely covered her, was fastened over her golden hair, which shone like sunshine through mist, by two huge, simple pearls with invisible settings, and comprised her only ornaments.

There was not an atom of color about her, save the dazzling gold of her hair, and the wonderful azure of her eyes, and she seemed almost like some heavenly vision, too pure and beautiful for earth, and more than one of the few guests present felt the tears rise unbidden to their eyes as they looked upon the lovely orphan, and realized the deep sorrow through which she had so recently been called to pass, and thought how much of sadness must be mingled with the event of that important hour.

Some surprise was felt that Mrs. Langley should absent herself from the wedding; but those present were too well-bred to express it, and the fact was quietly ignored.

When Howard had gone to Cecile's boudoir to lead her below, he found her alone, and waiting for him. He stopped with a quickly drawn breath upon the threshold, as she turned her pure, tender eyes upon him.

She seemed to him almost like some vestal virgin, too pure to belong to the world, too sacred to be claimed by him; but the glad light which glorified her face when she saw him, dispelled his fancies, and he went forward and took her reverently into his arms.

"My darling," he whispered, tenderly, "you seem beyond me to-day. Somehow I do not feel worthy of you."

"Howard, don't say that, please, for you are all that I have in the world, and it is *I* who am not worthy of *you*," Cecile returned, clinging to him. "But," she added, a glow coming into her cheeks, "I believe that our *love* makes us worthy of each other."

Howard smiled.

"What wise and apt little sayings you utter sometimes, Cecile," he said. "Yes, I believe that our love *is* true and pure, and that alone would make us worthy of each other. But, dearest, I never saw you so lovely in your life before as you are now."

Her eyes deepened and glowed.

"That is what I shall live for henceforth, to be lovely in your sight, Howard," she said.

He bent forward and kissed her tenderly, the caress expressing more than words could have done, and at that instant the clock upon the mantel chimed eleven strokes with its silver hammer.

Both started slightly at the sound.

"Who is below?" Cecile asked, a grave look settling over her face.

"The Eldreds, Leverns, Frank Hovey, Appleton Tracy, and the Carrols—only a very few, dear, besides Rev. Mr. Lathrop."

Her eyes still lingered upon his as if she would question him further, and he seemed to interpret their mute query, for he continued, a flush rising to his brow:

"Helen has not come, although I sent her word yesterday at what hour the ceremony would occur. I offended her deeply a few days ago, and perhaps she has not forgiven me yet. But do not allow her absence to trouble you, my darling; she will feel ashamed of it by and by.

Cecile made no reply, but almost unconsciously her form straightened, and her head assumed a prouder poise. The blood of the Vavasours was every bit as good as that of the Montgomerys, and Helen Langley should never trample upon her simply because fortune had favored her with a heavy purse.

"Are you ready, love?" Howard asked, wondering somewhat at the cold look that shot into her eyes.

And for answer she gravely laid her white-gloved hand upon his arm, and they went below into the flower-garlanded room, where, in a few simple, but solemn words, the clergyman made them husband and wife, praying

earnestly that the best of earth's blessings might be theirs as they walked together on life's journey, while not one of that company dreamed of the fearful darkness, wretchedness, and misery which was to shroud their pathway almost from the very beginning.

More than once during that short ceremony a choking sob arose in Cecile's white throat as she thought of those dear ones sleeping in Greenwood, and that she could receive no fond parental blessing on the most important day of her life.

But she gave no outward sign of her sorrow; she was fast learning lessons of self-control, and no one would have imagined from her grave and composed manner that bitter longing and heart-breaking grief were raging within her bosom.

The words were spoken, and Cecile Vavasour was Howard Montgomery's wife. As he lifted her vail and touched her lips there was a world of love in his look, and of repressed tenderness in his manner.

The congratulations which followed were very quietly though earnestly spoken, for every one felt the sadness that hung over the house, and knew that anything like demonstrative joy would grate on the young bride's sensitive nerves.

A sumptuous breakfast had been spread in the grand dining-room; the last that Cecile was to eat in the beautiful home where she had been so happy and free from care; and after this was served the guests departed, leaving the newly-made husband and wife to take their farewell of the place by themselves.

They gathered together what few treasures they were to take with them—the remainder were to be carefully packed and stored until their return from Europe—and then went away to spend the week that remained to them before sailing at the Grand Union Hotel.

Three days later an auctioneer's flag waved over the porch of the Vavasour mansion, and one after another of its luxurious appointments were struck off to the highest bidder, and it was not long before the lofty rooms and halls were rifled of their beauty and glory, and left empty, silent, and desolate.

The following Saturday Mr. and Mrs. Howard Montgomery went on board the Britannia, of the White Star line, bound for their European trip.

As they were passing from the carriage to the steamer Howard suddenly stopped, saying he would like to get some morning papers, and leading Cecile to a small waiting-room near by, he left her to go in search of some.

She had not been alone more than a minute when a boy darted into the room and thrust a note into her hand, then disappeared as quickly as he had come.

She instantly recognized him as being Mrs. Langley's errand boy, and surmised at once from whom the note might be.

Imagining that it might contain something of an unpleasant nature, she put it into her pocket, thinking she would not read it until she could be by herself. Howard was liable to return, and she did not wish to disturb him unnecessarily.

Half an hour later, while her husband was busy looking after their baggage, she slipped into their state-room and read it.

It was curt, insolent and bitter.

"CECILE VAVASOUR:—I shall never forgive you, and you will live to regret the step you have taken. You may live for years thinking you are blessed and happy; you may travel the world over; but vengeance will pursue you and wait for you. You are the cause of a bitter estrangement between me and my brother, and when he tires of you, as I know he will, you will experience something of what I now feel. You have defied me, and for that beware! I repeat, you will live to regret it.

"HELEN LANGLEY."

Cecile's face was pale as she read this, but a smile of scorn curled her lips, while she tore the note into atoms and scattered them out of her window upon the waters.

"It is but the idle threat of an angry woman. I give it to the winds," she said.

"Howard tire of me? Never!" she continued, a look

of high resolve settling over her face. "Helen Langley, you have made a mistake in your estimate of my character, and you will live to find that I had something better than *money* to give to your brother when I became his wife—a love that will overcome every obstacle for his sake, and make me so necessary to his happiness and life, that name, fortune and position will be nothing in comparison."

When her husband sought her to go on deck and watch the steamer leave her moorings, Cecile's face was as serene and untroubled as if no such person as Helen Langley existed, and she had indeed given her threats to the winds.

CHAPTER V.

A PRESENTIMENT.

A YEAR of foreign travel; a year of wandering among scenes of beauty and art; a year of such perfect joy and blessedness as seldom falls to the lot of human beings in this sin-blighted world; a year of utter content, of freedom from care, of delightful study and culture, and then Howard Montgomery and his fair young wife began to long for a return to their own country.

To Cecile this year had passed like a beautiful dream. They had been everywhere, and seen everything, and in every place. This aspiring young wife had bought books and maps, and made herself mistress of both the history and geography of the locality, reading by the hour to her husband, determined that this opportunity should be improved to the utmost. She studied art and artists with a zest which few travelers possess, and became so familiar with the style and works of the old masters that she could tell, almost at a glance, to whom a painting belonged.

Seldom, I ween, do tourists visit the Old World and garner up knowledge, and store away incident, and romance, and legend, as did this fair enthusiast, who had vowed to rise to her husband's level, and make herself so necessary to his happiness that the evil prophecy of his ill-natured sister—"that he would tire of her"—could never by any possibility be fulfilled.

Hand in hand, all by themselves, with no one to annoy or criticise, these wedded lovers had visited the palaces and galleries of art scattered through all Europe; they had roved through the fragrant groves of orange, and lemon, and olive, in sunny Italy—spent weeks in the "Eternal City," visiting the ruins of its temples,

palaces, and churches; they had traversed the deserted streets of those once buried but now partially excavated cities, Herculaneum and Pompeii, climbed Vesuvius, and sailed upon the fair Bay of Naples.

Now they ascended the Alpine heights—now spent a few weeks upon the shores of some beautiful lake, and penetrated into Russia, Austria and Turkey.

Ah! it was a year never to be forgotten; it was like a poem—a vision of delight; and just as the moon of the twelfth month was waning, there came to the happy couple a crowning joy—a sweet spirit in human form, dainty, perfect, almost divine.

A second Cecile this little one bade fair to be, and in this wondrous happiness of fatherhood and motherhood, it almost seemed as if heaven itself had opened for them.

"Howard, it makes me afraid," Cecile said one day with a sort of awe stealing over her as they were both hovering over the little one with tender smiles and fond, happy faces.

"What makes you afraid, my darling?" he asked, in surprise, but bending forward to kiss her beautiful lips.

"This happiness—our love—this perfect content."

"Are those not strange things to be afraid of? What do you fear?" he asked, smiling down into her serious eyes.

"I do not know," she answered, with a slight shiver, "but do you remember that perfect day when we left Venice for a sail down the Adriatic? The sea was like burnished silver; the sky like an azure dome; our vessel like a cradle; but before we were aware of it the heavens grew black, the waters like a boiling caldron, and a terrible death stared us in the face for hours. Do you remember, Howard?"

"Yes, dear, of course I remember; no one could forget so terrible an experience. But why do you speak of it in connection with our joy now? Surely you do not anticipate that our life, so auspiciously begun, will terminate in anything so fierce and disastrous? You are

weak yet, from your illness, Cecile. I fear you are nervous and imaginative. Let us take our happiness as it is given to us, and not mar it unnecessarily by the expectation of evil," Howard returned, fondly.

"I suppose I am foolish to think of any such thing, but, oh, Howard! I am so perfectly happy and content; so honored and blessed in your love, and almost transported with delight in the possession of this little living gem—this priceless treasure whom God has sent to us, that I tremble lest something should occur to poison our joy—to dash our brimming cup to the ground."

"Cecile," her husband answered, gravely, "I realize as well as you that our life at present is filled with brightness and promise, and I can discern as yet no shadow that is likely to fall upon it. But we know that trials must come to every one; they will doubtless come to us in some form or other; I expect them, and if God sends them I trust that we shall both bear them in the right spirit; for we know it is those 'whom He loveth that He chasteneth.' But while we have each other—while we *love* each other, have our health and our child spared to us, we can bravely meet almost anything else."

"Ah, yes!" Cecile said, earnestly, "I could bear anything else. I should not dread any earthly trouble, if I could only be assured that these blessings will be vouchsafed to me. But since we have talked of returning I have felt oppressed at times. Howard, I could bear anything cheerfully; there is nothing in the world I could not bear better than to lose you or your love," she repeated, almost tremblingly, while she twined her fair arms about his neck and laid her cheek to his.

He leaned back and looked into her face, his own very grave; her intense, passionate devotion moved him strangely.

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols," he murmured, softly, then added, with a solemnity which she had never seen in him before:

"My *love* is something that you can *never* lose while I live; for myself, of course, I cannot answer, as I am not my own keeper. But," he continued, more brightly,

"do not, my darling, take that horrible day upon the Adriatic as an omen of our future. I never dreamed that the memory of it would cling to you in this way; or if it *will* haunt you in spite of yourself, do not forget its glorious close; its matchless sunset; its gorgeous clouds, which hung like beautiful paintings upon the western sky; our peace and joy for our safety, after our extreme peril; how we glided smoothly into port over the almost pulseless bosom of the waters, and the enchantment of the mellow voices of the Italian sailors, as they caroled their evening hymn. If we get through life with only one storm," he added, laughingly, "I think we may consider ourselves very fortunate, and we shall do better than very many people."

Cecile smiled at his pleasantry, but there was a wistful look, notwithstanding, in her fathomless eyes.

She could not own even to him how vividly Helen Langley's malicious words had impressed her ever since they had begun to talk of returning to America, and as she turned to take her child, who just then waked, she breathed an earnest prayer that all evil might be kept from her treasures.

Little Margaret Montgomery, or "Daisy," as they fondly called her, first opened her starry eyes to this world on the borders of beautiful Lake Geneva, where, in the shadows of glorious old Mont Blanc, and beneath lovely Alpine skies, they rested for several weeks.

When Cecile was strong enough they went from here to Paris for a month; from there to London for another week, and thence to Liverpool, where they were to take the steamer for home.

At Liverpool they were unexpectedly detained for three or four days, as the vessel on which they had intended to sail had met with an accident during her last return voyage, and could not be repaired in season for the advertised date of sailing.

They took rooms, during this delay, in a hotel not far from the pier from which the steamer sailed, and they were not at all sorry for their detention, as it gave them an opportunity to revisit some places of interest over

which they had been obliged to hurry during their previous sojourn there.

A good nurse had been obtained for baby Daisy, a young, strong, good-natured Scotch girl, who desired to "emigrate to America to seek her fortune," and who was delighted to have the care of a lovely child; so Howard and his wife felt perfectly free to go and come as they chose.

Cecile had now fully recovered her strength and usual health—indeed she was even more beautiful than when she had left home.

Perfect happiness, removal from all sorrowful associations, and her year of study and sight-seeing had done much for her.

She had grown at least two inches in height, and she had acquired a polish, a dignity, and self-possession which enhanced, tenfold, her other charms.

Everywhere they went the handsome, distinguished-looking Americans attracted attention and respect, and Howard Montgomery was exceedingly proud of his lovely, accomplished wife. Indeed, he was more deeply in love with her than he had been before their marriage, and could his sister have seen them together, she would have thought any other result was likely to occur rather than what she had prophesied—that "he would tire of her."

The Germanica was at length ready to sail, and on a bright, perfect day in July, our friends went on board and settled themselves comfortably for the homeward voyage, both light-hearted and joyous, anticipating this home-coming with all the delight which all long-absent wanderers experience when their faces are set toward their native shores.

After their traveling appurtenances had been disposed of in their state-rooms, baby Daisy—who was sweetly sleeping—deposited in a berth, and nurse sitting by to watch her, Howard took his wife on deck to find a comfortable place for their chairs, where they might watch other arrivals, and the steamer as she left her moorings. He found a cool, shady spot, beneath a bridge of the upper deck, settled Cecile in her chair, placed a footstool

for her feet, and then tossing some magazines into her lap, asked if she was "comfortable."

"I am always that—you never allow me to be any other way but comfortable," she answered, smiling affectionately up into his face.

His glowing eyes told her that if they had been beyond observation she would have received something more than a verbal return for her sweet appreciation of his attention.

He stood beside her, not feeling inclined just then to sit, and taking off his hat, drew forth his handkerchief to wipe the perspiration from his forehead.

As he did so a paper that had been in the same pocket dropped at his feet.

He stooped to pick it up, and a blank look instantly settled upon his face.

"What is it?" Cecile asked, observing it.

"It is the bill for the rugs and shawls that I bought for you and nurse, yesterday," he said in dismay. "I have forgotten to settle it."

"Oh, Howard! how did it happen? It is not like you to forget anything like that," Cecile said, ruefully.

"I know it," he returned with a troubled air; "but I had just paid our passage-money and found that I had not quite enough with me to settle the bill, so I told the clerk of whom I had purchased the articles to send the bill to the office of the hotel and I would pay it there. I received it last evening, and intended to go at once and make it all right but met Jacobson, who had just arrived on the Britannia, from New York, and became so interested in talking over home matters with him that it slipped my mind; then you know we all went to the theater; and to-day, with all the bustle and confusion, of course it has not occurred to me."

"What can you do about it?" Cecile asked, anxiously.

Howard looked at his watch.

"There are two hours yet before the steamer sails," he said, meditatively. "I can easily go and settle it in

half an hour; the shop is only a few steps from the hotel where we stopped."

"Oh, Howard! could you not send? If anything *should* happen," Cecile said, nervously.

"What could happen, dear? The store is not ten minutes' drive from here. I can easily go and return in half an hour; but to make sure I will see the captain."

He turned abruptly, and left her as he ceased speaking, and Cecile shivered as if from the cold, while the day seemed suddenly to have lost half its brightness.

"How foolish I am," she murmured, impatiently. "Of course Howard would run no risk, and I have no right to question his judgment;" and yet there was a strange sinking at her heart—a presentiment of some coming evil.

Howard soon returned, looking much relieved.

"The captain says there will be plenty of time, dear," he said, "so I will take a carriage and go just as quickly as I can."

"I *wish* you did not need to go. Is there not some one whom you can send instead?" the young wife asked, reaching out to take her husband's hand, and clinging to it.

"I wish I did not need to go, too; but it serves me right for my carelessness," he answered, smiling. "I do not know of any one whom I can send—everybody is busy on board, and I should not know whom to trust. I must have the bill receipted, too, you know."

Still Cecile clung to him; it did not seem as if she could let him go.

"Do not worry, my darling. I will return with all possible dispatch, and I should not like to go home leaving a bill like this unpaid."

He bent down to her, ostensibly to wrap the shawl, which was falling from her shoulders, more closely about her, but really to touch her anxious brow reassuringly with his lips, and then he made his way quickly from

the steamer, while as she watched his retreating form there rose to Cecile's mind with a vividness that was startling the memory of that terrible day on the Adriatic —of that storm which had so nearly wrecked them—so nearly blotted them out of existence.

Was it some bird of ill-omen whispering to her of the dark future awaiting her—of the pain, and suffering and toil, of the misery and suspense that were to test her endurance, her faith and love to the utmost?

CHAPTER VI.

"I SHALL NEVER SEE HIM AGAIN."

CECILE took up one of her magazines after her husband left her, and tried to read.

But she could not fix her attention upon anything; her mind followed Howard anxiously, and there was a feeling of unrest and foreboding in her heart that something might occur to detain him beyond the hour appointed for sailing.

"How foolish I am," she murmured again; "there are two hours. He will be as anxious as I to get back, and of course will use all possible dispatch; besides, the captain said there would be ample time, and it is worse than folly for me to be so nervous about it."

She lay back in her chair and looked out over the waters of the river, noting the different kinds of vessels with their busy sailors, and the gayly-colored flags of many countries floating on the breeze.

It was a lovely day, almost as perfect as that when they had started for their sail down the Adriatic, and she shuddered visibly as the thought intruded itself upon her mind again.

"Why need that experience haunt me so now?" she said, with a strange dread and tension at her heart, while the look of anxiety deepened in her eyes.

"I am getting imaginative, nervous, unreasonable; there can be no probability of a storm to-day, with such a sky as this and in this latitude. How cool and delicious the breeze is as it sweeps up the river; I *will* not think of anything unpleasant—it is childish and weak in me. How comfortably Howard has arranged every thing for me; I believe I am actually getting drowsy sit-

ting here. How thoughtful for my comfort—how good he is to me."

Her golden head, surmounted by its dainty sea-hood of delicate blue, lay back upon its pillow of rich crimson, her round, fair cheek and perfectly molded chin seeming more delicately fair and beautiful by contrast; her blue eyes looked off upon the river with a dreamy gaze, while a smile, tender and fond, played about her red lips as she recalled her husband's devotion to her every need.

Gradually the blue of the sky seemed to dissolve into the dull gray of the waters—dull gray into blue; the murmuring of many voices, the treading of busy feet, sounded farther and farther away; the golden lashes drooped; the crimson lips parted just enough to show tips of white teeth beneath, and Cecile Montgomery slept.

She had been broken of her rest the night previous, but she had not been conscious of any weariness or languor until left there by herself, with the sunlit waters sparkling around her, and the cool, delicious air playing about her, and softly fanning her with its drowsy wings.

She and Howard, with their friend who had just arrived from New York, had attended the theater the previous evening, and upon their return little Miss Daisy had taken it into her small, willful head to give an extra entertainment of two hours' duration; so that more than one of the "wee sma' hours" of the morning had struck before the anxious young father and mother had been able to close their eyes in slumber.

A gentleman, standing upon the bridge above, looked down upon the unconscious wife as she lay there in her quiet repose, and thought he had never seen so perfect a picture in all his life as that fair face outlined against the rich, warm hue of the pillow; the golden hair stirring gently about her white forehead like flickering sunbeams, the lovely tinted cheek, the parted coral lips, and the small, perfect hands clasped above the folds of her luxurious shawl.

He had been pacing back and forth upon the upper deck for nearly an hour; he seemed to be alone among that busy, surging crowd, which he studied with a shrewd, searching gaze as he passed and repassed.

He had seen Howard Montgomery and his young wife when they had first come up from their state-room; he had remarked his thoughtful attention for her; how he had lingered over his work of arranging her shawls and pillow, as if the little service was a delight to him. He had seen Howard's perplexity over the paper he had dropped, although he could not hear one word of their conversation, and Cecile's evident anxiety at his decision upon some point; he had noted the light but tender caress that he had dropped upon her brow as he left her to go on shore, and his heart had been strangely stirred with interest in this handsome, loving couple.

"Some bride and groom on their wedding tour," he thought to himself; "but he has a right to be fond of her, for she is wonderfully beautiful; and he—well, it is not often that a couple are so well matched as to good looks."

Every time he passed over the bridge, involuntarily he glanced below at the fair young wife; and, now that he saw she was sleeping, he could not forbear to linger a moment and feast his eyes upon her delicate beauty.

There was nothing bold or rude in his gaze; only an intense appreciation of the beautiful; and, almost before he was aware of it, he found himself repeating:

"She sleeps: her breathings are not heard;
The fragrant tresses are not stirred
That lie upon her charmed heart.
She sleeps; on either hand up swells
The gold-fringed pillow lightly prest.
She sleeps, nor dreams, but ever dwells
A perfect form in perfect rest."

He started as the words died on his lips, as if suddenly conscious that he was guilty of rudeness; and lifting his hat reverently, as if he stood on sacred ground, he cast one lingering look below and then went away.

Cecile was conscious of a strange sensation when she awoke; perhaps it was that which caused her to awake.

She sat up suddenly, every sense on the alert in a moment, her deep blue eyes wide with surprise, her cheeks flushing vividly, her hands clasped with a sudden fear.

The Britannia had cast off from her moorings, and was moving slowly down the Mersey, but—where was her husband?

It was only for an instant, however, that this feeling of dismay lasted.

A smile curved her ripe lips, a tender light leaped into her eyes.

"How absurd of me to be so startled!" she murmured. "He has returned, of course, and finding me asleep, would not disturb me."

But she cast aside her wraps, arose from her chair, and made her way down to her state-room, where Martha, the nurse, sat with baby Daisy on her lap, and who was cooing and talking to her in the most social, babyfied manner imaginable.

Cecile's face lighted, and she smiled, like the fond mother that she was, at the pretty sight.

She bent down and kissed the soft, chubby little hands, which appeared to be keeping up a boxing-match with some invisible foe, and tenderly toying for a moment with the golden ring of hair that clustered around the small head.

Then she asked:

"Martha, have you seen Mr. Montgomery?"

"No, madam. I thought he was above with you," the girl answered.

Instantly the smile faded from Cecile's lips, the light from her eyes, the color from her cheeks.

Surely, if her husband had returned, and found her sleeping, his next thought would have been for his child, and he would have come at once to their state-room.

She turned quickly and left the place, threading her way swiftly along the passage, up the stairway, to the deck once more.

With a sinking heart, she searched the lower deck

thoroughly; then mounting to the upper, she paced its entire length, her cheeks whitening with a terrible fear as she looked in vain for the familiar, idolized form of her husband.

A sensation of desolation began to steal over her; everywhere her quick, anxious glance encountered crowds of people, and all were strangers; there was not a face there that she had ever seen before.

With trembling limbs and faltering steps she made her way down into the saloon, where she continued her quest with the same result. Howard was nowhere to be seen.

Down into the dining-room, where the stewards were laying the table for dinner, she crept, looking like some beautiful spirit, her white face gleaming like chiseled marble, her azure eyes growing wild and full of terror.

"Madam is sick; she is faint from the motion of the boat," a steward said, approaching her and startled by her ghastly looks.

"No, I am not sick," she answered, with colorless, quivering lips; "but I am looking for my husband. I—I fear he has been left behind."

Her fear given expression to, seemed more appalling than ever.

How could she bear the ten or eleven days that must follow, and not know her husband's fate?

The suspense would be intolerable.

"Where can I find the captain?" she asked, leaning against the side of the vessel for support, for she was very weak and trembling with nervousness.

"The captain is probably in the wheel-house," the steward answered, bending a look of compassion upon her white, beautiful face, and she turned to retrace her steps to the deck.

But her strength began to fail her; she reeled, and would have fallen, but the kind-hearted steward saved her.

He assisted her up the stairs, and just as they reached the top they encountered the gentleman who had stood

upon the bridge looking down upon Cecile while she slept.

He, too, thought she must be affected by the motion of the boat; that white face surely must be an indication of that dread disease of the nerves—sea-sickness.

He lifted his hat courteously.

"Can I be of any assistance? Madam is sick; allow me to help you to your chair," he said in peculiarly rich, mellow tones.

Cecile shook her head; she was never troubled with what the French call *mal de mer*, except in the roughest of weather, and then but slightly; but she was—oh! so sick at heart.

"Madam is not ill; she fears her husband has been left behind," the steward explained.

The stranger's face expressed dismay for a moment; then he said:

"Impossible! He, of course, knew the hour of sailing, and he would allow nothing to prevent his being on board in season. The steamer is very large; he must be here somewhere, I think. If madam will allow me I will assist in looking for him."

Cecile was a trifle cheered by this sympathy and offer of aid. She saw at once that he was a gentleman, and she instinctively trusted him.

It was barely possible, after all, that Howard had returned, and might even now be in some part of the vessel examining the machinery or some other object of interest; but it was not like him—he was ever watchful for her comfort, he idolized his child, and it was very strange if he had returned and had not gone to either of them.

However, it was a ray of hope to which she could cling for a little while, and she seized it eagerly.

"My husband was obliged to go ashore after we came aboard," she explained. "He left me sitting in my chair, where I went to sleep, and when I awoke I was badly frightened to find that the steamer had started."

"It is natural that you should feel somewhat alarmed under the circumstances," the stranger returned; "but

I still cling to the opinion that he is here somewhere. However," he added, drawing a card from his pocket and handing it to her, "if you will let this serve as an introduction and permit me to act as your escort, we will look for him together."

Cecile glanced at the name upon the card.

"Gregory Mortimer, M.D., San Francisco, Cal.," she read.

She liked the name. It had a strong, reliable sound, and looking into the noble face, she felt lighter of heart, in spite of her forebodings.

His manner, too, was reassuring; it invited confidence, and she felt that she could commit herself to him without a fear.

"Thank you, Dr. Mortimer," Cecile answered, her face losing a trifle of its misery; "allow me to introduce myself as Mrs. Montgomery, and I shall accept your offer very gratefully, as I am an entire stranger to every one on board, and as you met me I was feeling about as wretched as it is possible for any one to be."

She took the arm he offered, and together they went over the vessel, looking into every place where it was likely that any one would go.

"He is not here," Cecile said, in despair, when, for the fifth time, they had traversed both decks, and her eyes ached and her brain grew dizzy with looking into every face they encountered.

"He would have come to me—he never would have left me in such suspense all this time; something has happened to him—some accident; he never would have missed the steamer otherwise. What shall I do?"

Her face was like chalk, her lips trembled, and she was ready to sink from exhaustion and nervous fear.

"I will take you to your chair, and then I will see the captain," her companion remarked, looking very grave himself now.

He, too, felt that the man who had parted so tenderly from her so recently would not have allowed her to suffer this suspense on his account; he would have come to her before this, had he been on the vessel.

He led her back to the place where she had last seen her husband, put her into the chair, and arranged her pillow and wraps, and then went in search of the captain.

In a few words he related Cecile's trouble, and the captain remembered the fact of Howard's coming to him to ascertain if there would be time to go ashore and transact his business; and he now appeared quite disturbed to find that he was still missing.

He instituted inquiries, and another and more vigorous search; but it is needless to say that it was as fruitless as the others had been.

More than an hour had elapsed since the vessel sailed, and if he had been among the passengers he must have made his appearance before this.

Dr. Mortimer reluctantly went back to Cecile with the evil tidings.

"Mrs. Montgomery," he tried to say cheerfully, "I fear we shall be obliged to forego the pleasure of your husband's company on this voyage; doubtless something unforeseen detained him longer than he was aware of. But it will probably be only seven or eight days before we shall arrive in New York, where you will doubtless find a cablegram awaiting you explaining the cause of his unfortunate delay."

"You cannot find him," she said, in a strained, unnatural voice, and the look that she bent upon him haunted him for months afterward—it was so appealing yet so despairing.

"No; the captain has had every nook and corner searched, but——"

"Something has happened to him—some dreadful accident—I shall never see him again!" Cecile moaned, and fell back in her chair white and still, like some fair flower with the life suddenly crushed out of it.

CHAPTER VII.

POOR CECILE.

THE news of the mysterious disappearance of the husband of "that beautiful Mrs. Montgomery" spread over the steamer like wild-fire, and the deepest sympathies of the passengers were instantly aroused for the unfortunate young wife.

Dr. Mortimer himself carried her immediately to her state-room, anxious to get her away from curious eyes, and remained there with her, applying restoratives until she recovered from her swoon.

Then as he looked into her eyes and met the look of settled despair written there, his great heart ached for her.

She made no wild outward demonstration of grief; she did not even weep and bemoan her hard lot, as most women would have done; she made no complaint, but the lines of agony stamped about her sweet mouth, her white, hopeless face and sad eyes, were harder to encounter, and appealed more strongly to one's compassion than the loudest lamentation would have done.

"Do not be unduly anxious, Mrs. Montgomery," the noble-hearted doctor said to her. "I know your position is an exceedingly trying one, but I feel confident that you will receive a cablegram as soon as we arrive. It will probably be brought to you before you leave the boat, and as another vessel sails three days later, it will probably be only ten or twelve days before you will be joined by your husband again."

He really believed what he argued; neither he nor the captain attached so very much grave importance to Mr. Montgomery's absence, beyond the annoyance and anx-

iety which his wife must necessarily suffer on his account.

Such incidents had occurred before, where people, having been detained by unforeseen circumstances, had taken the next steamer and arrived only a few days later than the one on which they were intending to sail.

But Cecile only murmured again in a hopeless tone:

"Something has happened to him; nothing but some fearful accident would have kept him."

For three days she lay in her berth, and could not be tempted to leave it—indeed, she seemed utterly prostrated by the blow.

While her baby slept she would insist upon holding her in her arms close to her heart, and would gaze upon her with such a worshipful yet heart-broken expression, as if she felt that the little one was all that she had left, and it was some comfort to have her near her, that even strong Dr. Mortimer and the hardy captain could not look upon her unmoved.

The captain was very kind, attending personally to many of her wants, showing her every attention in his power, in the way of sending her fruit, delicacies, etc.; but to every entreaty that she would go on deck, where she could have the benefit of fresh air, she turned a deaf ear; she shrank from the gaze of strangers, until Dr. Mortimer appealed to her motherhood.

"Positively, Mrs. Montgomery," he said, "you are not only doing yourself serious injury by remaining in this close atmosphere, but your child is suffering in consequence; you must consider your own health for her sake."

Cecile looked alarmed.

"Is Daisy ill?" she questioned, turning to Martha, her heart throbbing wildly with a new fear.

"No, madam; not ill, but she has been very restless and fretful for the last two days," the girl answered.

"Is it because I have been grieving so?" she asked anxiously of the doctor.

"Yes," he said, decidedly, but tears stood in his manly eyes as he looked at her.

He was determined to get her out of that wretched cabin, even though he knew that every sensitive feeling recoiled from the thought of becoming an object of pity and observation to others.

"Then I will go on deck immediately," Cecile said, starting up. "I have been thoughtless—selfish; oh! my Daisy, if I should lose *you*, too!" and she caught the child to her convulsively.

She allowed them to wrap her in shawls and rugs and carry her above, and many an eye grew moist with sympathy as they looked into her wan face and saw the evidences of suffering depicted there.

Every day after that Dr. Mortimer's first duty, after he had taken his breakfast, was to bring her above and put her in the coziest corner of the deck, where, sheltered from the rough winds, she would lie all day quiet and pale, looking out absently over the rolling waters, making no trouble, and noticing no one, save her baby, as from time to time Martha brought the little one to her.

Every dainty which the vessel afforded was brought to her, but at first she turned with loathing from food.

"I cannot eat; it would choke me," she said, with a sob.

Here Dr. Mortimer's tact served a good purpose again.

"You must," he said, decidedly, and taking little Miss Montgomery from her nurse's arms he planted her upon her mother's lap, saying, with a gayety which he was far from feeling:

"There, Miss Daisy, tell your mamma to look at you, and disobey my commands if she dare."

The child's face was somewhat pale, and her large blue eyes looked up at her mother with a sort of wistful, wondering gaze.

Cecile gathered her close to her heart with a low moan, for she saw at once that she was not looking well.

"My darling, my darling, I will do *anything* for your sake," she murmured, brokenly.

And she obediently and faithfully followed the physician's every suggestion after that.

It is doubtful if so much of interest ever centered in one person on shipboard before.

But the forlorn and beautiful woman, with her lovely sapphire-eyed child, appealed to every heart.

Matrons and maidens, old men and young, besieged Martha as soon as she made her appearance on deck in the morning with Daisy in her arms, and during those eight days of the voyage the young nurse found her duties comparatively light.

She never allowed the child to go out of her sight, but patiently followed whoever took her, until he or she was ready to relinquish her to her care again.

Most of the passengers were too well-bred and delicate to force their attentions and sympathy upon the suffering mother, and so it found vent and expression in the petting of her little one.

As they drew near New York, Cecile grew very restless and nervous. She said nothing, but it was easy to tell from her manner how her impatient heart was longing for the hour of arrival.

Her eyes lost their heart-broken expression, while an anxious, almost wild look, took its place; a spot of red burned on either cheek, her hands grew hot and feverish, and her whole appearance caused Dr. Mortimer no small amount of uneasiness.

The tension of her nervous system, he knew, was very great, and he feared a reaction.

"If there is no message for her when we land, I shall fear the consequences," he said to the captain, as they paced the deck together during the last evening on shipboard.

"I think that she *must* receive one," he replied. "I cannot conceive of any accident that could have occurred to him in the short distance he was obliged to go from the vessel."

After breakfast on the last day before landing, Martha came to her mistress with an anxious face.

"Madam, the purser gave notice this morning that the tickets would be collected at dinner to-day," she said.

Cecile looked up at her, startled.

"The tickets!" she repeated.

"Yes'm."

"Martha, I have no tickets. Mr. Montgomery had them," she said, a vivid flush overspreading her whole face, as this new difficulty presented itself.

"So I supposed, madam, but I thought I ought to tell you," the girl answered.

"Certainly; but what can I do? I have not more than fifty dollars in my purse, and that sum would not defray half the amount of our passage," and Cecile looked exceedingly anxious; but this intelligence served to arouse her more than anything else had done during the voyage.

She sent at once for the captain, and stated her dilemma to him.

She knew, she said, that her husband had purchased tickets, for he had spoken of the fact in connection with the business which had called him away before they sailed.

He did not doubt her statement in the least, but the law of the company required that every ticket should be taken up before the vessel arrived in port, and of course he must comply with the regulations.

"Of course if I had the necessary funds I should not hesitate to repay our passage," Cecile said, noticing his grave look; "but," she continued, frankly, although the color arose to her temples, "I have only about fifty dollars by me. I never dreamed of such a contingency."

"Of course you did not, madam," the captain returned, politely, "and I will do what I can for you. Do not give yourself any uneasiness, for I do not doubt that the matter can be arranged in some way."

But the fact remained—he had brought so many passengers from England to America, and he must have either their thickets or an equivalent. If Howard Montgomery ever returned and presented the tickets he had paid for, the money would be refunded to him; if he did not, of course his wife's and her nurse's passage must be paid, and he knew he must demand it now.

Still his sympathies were with her, and in her present trouble and impecuniosity he could not bear to press his claim.

He sought Dr. Mortimer, and stated the matter to him.

The physician's face clouded, and then the blood rushed to his brow.

"Why could she not have confided in me?" he muttered to himself.

Then, excusing himself to the captain, he said: "I will see you again presently."

He went directly to Cecile.

"Mrs. Montgomery," he said, in a straightforward, manly way, "the captain has just told me of the difficulty in which you find yourself. It is very unfortunate, truly, and I wonder it had not occurred to me before that you might be in some such trouble. Will you allow me to settle this matter for you? I shall be in New York several weeks, and it will give me great pleasure to do this, and relieve you from all further anxiety; while your husband, upon his arrival, can present his tickets, and the company will of course refund the price of them."

"Dr. Mortimer," Cecile responded, gratefully, "you are very kind, and I am under great obligations to you for all that you have done for me during this very trying voyage. I accept your offer in the same spirit in which it is offered, and thank you most heartily, for it certainly will relieve me of a very unpleasant difficulty."

She held out her hand to him as she spoke, and as he took it in his strong clasp, bending low over it, a strange thrill shot through his whole frame.

He was a grand, noble-looking man of perhaps thirty-five years, possessing a massive form, broad-chested, square-shouldered, with a fine head, crowned with waving chestnut hair, firmly and proudly poised thereon.

His forehead was broad and full; his brown eyes gleamed with kindness and intelligence, and his mouth was expressive of gentleness and sweetness of soul, truth, and nobility of character.

He was a man to trust, to honor—yea, almost to reverence.

He had been a successful practicing physician for several years in San Francisco, but during the last six months he had been abroad for rest and a little insight into the mode of treating diseases in the old country, and now fate had sent him to the aid of this delicate, high-bred woman, who from the first had possessed a peculiar charm for him.

An intense excitement prevailed, a few hours later, on the Britannia, when the pilot came aboard bringing the ship's mail with him.

There were papers, letters, and telegrams for many of the passengers, but *no cablegram for poor Cecile*, and a shiver of dread and apprehension ran through Gregory Mortimer's nerves while he eagerly looked over the mail as it lay in the dining-room, found nothing, and realized the painful duty that remained for him to perform.

Slowly and sadly he went above to carry the disappointing news to the anxiously waiting wife; his feet seemed shod with lead, and he dreaded to meet those mournful, appealing blue eyes more than he had ever dreaded anything in his life before.

Cecile was watching for him in a fever of impatience, for she knew when he went below to look for her.

Her eyes burned, her hands shook, and her voice was hoarse and unnatural as she asked:

"Did you find anything?"

He took both her trembling hands in his, and said, compassionately:

"Mrs. Montgomery, there is nothing; but do not lose heart; your husband will surely be here on the next steamer."

He tried to speak hopefully, but his own heart was strangely depressed.

"Cecile had not realized until that moment how much she had hoped; but now every support seemed taken from her.

"*He is dead*, or he would surely have sent me some word!" she wailed, and dropped senseless to the deck.

CHAPTER VIII.

MATCHED.

WHEN Cecile came to herself again she was in a large, richly-furnished apartment of the St. Nicholas Hotel, New York; but with consciousness there came such a sense of dreariness and misery that life seemed almost too great a burden to be borne.

For a time she seemed almost benumbed, and not even the fretful cries of her child had power to arouse her; but on the morning of the fourth day after her arrival she suddenly inquired if the Germanic had arrived.

"Yes," answered Dr. Mortimer, who had come in a few moments before; "she came in two hours ago."

"Were you at the pier?" Cecile demanded, with glittering eyes and in a strained voice.

"Yes; but, dear child," he said, in reply to her imploring, questioning look, "Mr. Montgomery did not come, neither was his name on the list of passengers. Try, however, and be brave for a few days longer—he may come on the next boat."

Yet he felt as if the words were almost mockery as he uttered them. He was convinced now that something of a very serious nature must have occurred to keep Howard Montgomery on the other side of the ocean, without sending one word to relieve the suspense of his suffering wife.

For a few moments neither spoke, but it seemed as if years had suddenly been added to Cecile's age—as if all hope had been blotted out of her life forever.

At last she sat up and clasped her hands across her brow with a low moan—her bruised heart would not bear its crushing woe and be utterly silent.

But that was all the sign she gave of her suffering, beyond the agony that was visible in her countenance.

After a few moments she looked up into Dr. Mortimer's face, while over her own there had settled an expression of resolution, and said:

"Will you order a carriage for me, Dr. Mortimer?"

"Order a carriage for you, my child!" he exclaimed in astonishment; "you are not able to go out."

"Yes, I am," she returned decidedly, "and I must go at once to my husband's sister."

"Ah! Mr. Montgomery has a sister, then, in the city?" he said, a look of relief flitting across his face.

He had heard her speak of no one during all her trouble, and he had often wondered if she had friends upon whom she could depend during this hour of trial.

"Yes; Mrs. Colonel Langley, who lives on Fifth Avenue."

"I am very glad to hear this," he answered, "and I think the best thing you can do will be to go to her. If you are sure your strength is equal to what you propose, I will call a carriage for you, and accompany you also, if you desire."

"Thank you," Cecile answered calmly, but in a tone that was hollow and spiritless, "but I have trespassed too long upon your kindness already, and I shall do very well if I have a carriage. Martha, of course, will accompany me."

Dr. Mortimer bowed, then arose and left the room to do her bidding.

He returned in about twenty minutes, saying that a carriage was waiting, and found that the small family were all ready for their expedition.

Cecile was arrayed in a dark but tasteful street dress, while baby Daisy had been made irresistible in Paris robes of finest texture and heaviest embroidery, and honest Martha, in her neat traveling suit, was evidently very proud of her beautiful charge.

They all went down together, Dr. Mortimer assisting them to enter the coach, and seeing that everything was arranged for their comfort.

"Shall you remain here at the St. Nicholas for awhile longer?" Cecile asked of him as they were about starting.

"Yes, I shall remain here while I am in the city; can I do anything for you?" he returned.

"Thank you, no; but I wished to make sure where I could find you, as I shall hope to see you again before you leave;" then she signified her readiness to go on, and was driven away.

In less than an hour Cecile Montgomery stood in the presence of Helen Langley—of the woman who had taunted and insulted her before her marriage—who had sent a cowardly threat after her when she had started out upon her new life with bright hopes and a heart full of happiness.

It had required no small amount of courage and a sacrifice of pride to humble herself sufficiently to come to her now; but her extremity required it.

She was indebted to a man who was almost a stranger, for her passage across the Atlantic; she had scarce money enough to defray her hotel bills and carriage hire; she did not know the name of her husband's lawyer, and she did not know to whom else to go for aid.

She had resolved to borrow of her husband's sister until she could see Howard's lawyer and obtain the necessary funds from him.

A look of astonishment had flashed over Mrs. Langley's face when she entered her parlor and discovered who was awaiting her there, but it was quickly followed by a frown, as she turned to look for her brother.

Then her eyes fell upon Cecile's child in the lap of her nurse, and her face grew radiant.

She loved children dearly, although none had ever come to brighten her own home, and this dainty little bud won the heart of every one.

She swept across the room with quick, eager steps, took the child in her arms, and kissed her repeatedly.

She had not even answered Cecile's words of greeting; she had not noticed her sorrowful face and drooping manner.

"Is this your—is this Howard's child?" she demanded, abruptly.

"Yes," Cecile answered mournfully, while her heart involuntarily began to warm toward her haughty sister-in-law for her tenderness for her little one.

"Her name is Margaret. We call her Daisy," she added, with a sigh.

Mrs. Langley suddenly gave the child back to Martha, her face hardening again, as if she was suddenly conscious of the hostile attitude which she had assumed toward this intruder.

"Why are you here?" she asked, abruptly. "Did Howard send you? Where *is* Howard?"

"I do not *know* where Howard is," Cecile answered, wringing her hands, and almost losing her self-possession at this question.

"What is this you are telling me—you do not know where Howard is?" Helen Langley repeated, almost fiercely, and with blanching lips.

"No; I do not know;" and then in a few brief sentences Cecile related her sad story, and told her why she had come to her.

Mrs. Langley listened with an expression of fear on her face at first; then as Cecile went on, a strange evil light leaped into her eyes, and by the time she had finished she was cold and hard as adamant again.

"This is a *strange* story, to say the least, that you have told me," she said, with an accent of scorn; "but do you suppose I am going to *believe* it?"

"Why should you not believe it?" Cecile asked, wonderingly, yet flushing at the doubt cast upon her veracity.

"You *say* that Howard left you to go on shore to pay a bill only two hours before the steamer sailed. Do you think I do not know my brother better than that? He would never be so careless as to leave a bill unpaid until so late an hour; he was always prompt and exact in all business matters. No; there was a graver reason than that, let me assure you," the hardened woman retorted, with asperity.

"No, there was no other reason; what other motive could there have possibly been?" Cecile asked, regarding her with astonishment.

"Are you so stupid than you can assign none?" was the spirited reply, while the woman's eyes blazed vindictively. "Did I not warn you how it would be even before you were married? I knew my brother better than you did. I *told* you that he would tire of you, and now you have lived to see that my words are proved true. He has borne with you for a year; he has found that he could not endure it; he put you on board the steamer, and then made an excuse to leave you, that he might be free to enjoy life in his own way, and not be hampered with uncongenial society; you——"

"Hold, Helen, you have said enough; you shall not thus insult your absent brother—you shall not defame my husband's character," Cecile said, in stern, authoritative tones, while she arose from the chair where she had been sitting and confronted Mrs. Langley with a bearing as proud and dauntless as her own.

"Perhaps you think to wound me," she went on, her red lips curling scornfully, "by talking to me in this way; but I am too confident of my own position to allow your words to have a feather's weight with me. If you really believe what you say, you cannot be so well acquainted with your brother's character as you suppose yourself to be, and are doubtless measuring him by you own standard. No word of discord has ever passed between Howard and me; we were perfectly united in every thought, and our tour has been a source of delight to us both—a journey to be treasured as a blessed memory all our lives. I tell you that something has happened to him—he is sick, or, what I fear worse, dead," the stricken wife concluded, with a shuddering sob.

Helen Langley caught her breath at the word, but she made no other sign of the fear in her own heart; she had determined to drive Cecile to desperation if possible—to have a taste of "revenge" before she let her go.

"No," she said fiercely, "he is neither sick nor dead; but he has forsaken you—he has tired of your tamely pretty face, your simple, babyish ways. I told you that you could not keep pace with him intellectually, and he has found, all too late, that he was bound with fetters that he could not endure."

"Do you think that your brother—a *Montgomery*—of whose pride, honor and nobility you have boasted to me, would thus desert a helpless woman, leaving her penniless among strangers, with the care of a little child—*his* child, too— and no friends to whom she could go when she arrived at the end of her journey? Surely your ideas of Southern chivalry are exalted indeed," Cecile responded, indignantly and scornfully.

"Tamely pretty"—"babyish," Helen Langley had called that gloriously beautiful woman confronting her; but even as she had said it, her heart was burning with a fierce jealousy as she realized how grandly she had developed during her year of absence.

She was taller than when she went away, exquisitely proportioned, with features over which a sculptor would rave, eyes that burned and flashed with intelligence and thought, a high-bred air which proclaimed at once the cultivated lady, and a self-possession which all the overbearance and insolence of the proud woman of the world could not shake.

She knew well enough that if Howard had loved her when he married her he must worship her now; but even though she was wildly anxious over the intelligence which Cecile had brought her concerning his mysterious absence, she was determined to torture her by mocking at her grief, refuse her all aid, and drive her into a corner, to carry out a suddenly formed scheme of her own.

"You need not think to impose upon me," she retorted. Howard has forsaken you."

"Do you think he has no love for his child?" Cecile interrupted, with quivering lips and dilating nostrils.

"Of course he has, but what could a man do with a child of that age? He will probably allow you to keep her until she is a year or two older; then he will come

and take her and give her the advantages which it is proper that the daughter of a Montgomery should receive," was the heartless response.

Cecile drew herself up haughtily, her sapphire eyes blazing, her whole form dilating with a sense of outraged pride.

"Helen Langley," she said, "your own heart tells you that you are uttering the grossest falsehoods. You do not *believe* that my husband has forsaken me—you are only saying it to torture me, and you are actuated by the same spirit which prompted you to write me that malicious note on the day that I sailed for Europe with Howard. But although I know that I have not been deserted, that does not alter the fact that I am here alone, friendless and almost penniless. I came to you believing, for the sake of the love you have always professed for your brother, that you would not refuse to aid me until I can apply to his lawyer for the funds that I need. Howard had our tickets with him when he left the steamer, and I was obliged to borrow the money to pay our passage from an entire stranger."

"And who may this stranger be who was so kind as to befriend you in your destitution?" demanded Mrs. Langley, bending a searching gaze upon her.

"A Dr. Mortimer, of San Francisco—a most noble, kind-hearted gentleman."

"Indeed! and has this 'noble, kind-hearted gentleman' a family of his own?" Helen Langley asked mockingly.

Cecile flushed crimson.

"I do not know," she answered, coldly; "I have not even asked him; I have been too miserable from my own trouble to inquire into the affairs of others. But that is neither here nor there. I need money to cancel my indebtedness to him, and for other necessities. Surely you will loan it to me until I can see Howard's lawyer?"

"No, I will not loan you a dollar!" Mrs. Langley answered, excitedly.

"Helen! it cannot be possible that you will see your brother's wife in such a strait as this and refuse her all

assistance?" Cecile returned, in astonishment at her heartlessness, and growing pale at the thought of her extremity.

"Listen to me," Mrs. Langley said, bending nearer and speaking in a low, fierce tone. "I will not help you in the least; I will do nothing for you; if you were *starving* I would not give you a crust. You defied me once; I never have forgiven it; I never will forgive it; and now you shall pay the penalty."

Cecile gazed at her, blank amazement depicted on her lovely countenance.

"But I have nowhere to go; surely you will not refuse me and my child a shelter for a few days?" she said, humbling her pride for the sake of Daisy.

"Not even a shelter," was the cold response.

"Then I shall appeal to Colonel Langley," Cecile, said, decidedly, for she felt that she was utterly helpless without some assistance.

A low, mocking laugh rang through the room at her words.

"Surely you cannot be very well acquainted with my husband," Helen said. "Colonel Langley always has done, and always *will* do, exactly as I wish. But," she added, changing her manner and casting a wistful look at the lovely babe who was crowing merrily in Martha's arms, "I will tell you what I will do, Cecile. I will take your child; I will do anything for her; adopt her as my own, and give her every luxury until Howard returns; and, with that burden off your mind, you can easily find something to do to take care of yourself."

That *burden* off her mind!

Cecile turned upon her, all her spirit blazing forth at the cruel, heartless words—lighting her eyes, flushing her cheeks, curling her red lips with scorn and contempt, until she was perfectly dazzling in her proud beauty, her insulted motherhood.

For a moment she did not speak; her looks alone expressed the feelings that were surging within her.

Then with swift, graceful steps she crossed the room to Martha's side, took Daisy in her arms, and straining

her to her bosom, with a passionate gesture she turned again to Mrs. Langley.

"Give *you* my child! Are you utterly heartless!" she cried. "Let *you adopt* her! Give my bird into the claws of a vulture! Hard, cruel as you are, I do not wonder that God has made you childless—you are not worthy to be a mother—you are not worthy the blessedness of hearing the patter of little feet in your house—the music of fresh young voices around your hearth, or the training of pure little spirits for eternity. It was worse than folly for me to come to you; I might have known that you would turn a deaf ear to my entreaties; I might have spared myself the humiliation of asking aid from you."

"Yes, you might have known; you might have spared yourself," scoffed the proud woman; yet even as she spoke she could not help gazing with appreciation at the striking tableau which the beautiful young mother, with her lovely babe clasped in her arms, made, as she stood, confronting her sworn enemy, her face all aglow with indignation, scorn, and something of pity, while she poured forth those hot, scathing words of denunciation.

"Enough," she said, "I shall never bend to sue for a favor at your hands again. I will thank you to give me the address of my husband's lawyer, and then I will go."

"I will not do even that," said Helen Langley, with a glitter in her midnight eyes that was like that of a serpent when it is ready to spring upon its prey. "You have returned to America without your husband under very suspicious circumstances; you have, by your own confession, accepted both money from, and the attentions of, a stranger; you are entitled to no part of my brother's income or fortune without his consent; I shall veto your having anything; I shall use all my influence against you."

Cecile's heart sank like lead in her bosom at these terrible words—this almost diabolical threat. She had never dreamed but that she could apply to Howard's lawyer and obtain all the funds necessary for her maintenance, and she had that morning resolved that she would return

at once to Liverpool in search of her husband; she would devote her life to finding him, and to solving the mystery of his absence.

But what to do in the strait in which she now found herself she did not know; she felt utterly helpless, for ruin, beggary, stared her in the face.

But she would not allow the wicked, triumphant woman before her to see how utterly desparing she was; she should not thus trample upon her, and then gloat over her destitution and misery.

"Very well," she said, proudly, coldly, "of course there are others who know who Howard's lawyer is, and I shall be obliged to apply elsewhere for the information I desire. But, Helen Langley, there will yet come a day when you will remember the interview of this morning with deepest regret. You imagine, perhaps, that you can crush me, but—*you cannot do it*, and you will live to realize that fact in more senses than one; you will find *that a Vavasour is a match for a Montgomery.* Come, Martha."

Without waiting for any reply, without deigning even a backward glance, Cecile walked proudly from that gorgeous apartment, followed by her wondering servant.

Straight down to her carriage she went with the step of an outraged queen, baby Daisy still clasped close in her arms, as if she feared to let her go, lest she should be suddenly spirited away by some evil influence.

But the interview had been a very trying one to her, and her face was white and drawn as she sank upon the soft cushions of the carriage and allowed Martha to take the little one from her.

"Where to?" the driver inquired, politely touching his cap, and wondering what made that beautiful face so colorless and sad.

"Back to the St. Nicholas," she said, in a hard, strained tone, and uttered no other word during the long drive.

"Lady, will you give me employment?"

Helen Langley was standing just where Cecile had left her.

Her head was bowed, her face dark with anger and pale with fear, while she seemed lost in troubled thought.

She had been terribly moved by Cecile's story, for she saw at once how very strange it would be for her brother to leave his wife in such a way, without instantly sending her some word by cable as to the cause of his detention, or following her immediately on the next steamer, if he were living and well.

It troubled her greatly, but her cunning brain had at once seized upon the circumstance as an arrow which she could hurl at Cecile's heart, and she would willingly do anything to be able to sow dissension between these two—to part them, if possible, and thus gain her point and gratify her thirst for revenge upon the girl who had dared to thwart her by marrying her brother.

But as soon as Cecile was gone, her affection for Howard overcame all other feelings, and she stood troubled and anxious, thinking what she could do in the matter.

She started violently as the above words were breathed in low, smooth tones, almost in her ear; and turning quickly she grew paler than before, as she instantly recognized the intruder.

It was Selma—that same tall, handsome octoroon whom she had seen for the first and only time on that day of her last interview with Cecile, and the coincidence, somehow, made her feel very uncomfortable.

The woman seemed more sad and wan than she had then, and she stood with her eyes fixed upon the brilliant woman before her with a sort of pathetic expression.

"How came you here? Who admitted you?" Mrs. Langley demanded, haughtily, as she recovered somewhat from her surprise.

"No one admitted me, lady. I saw you through the window. The lady who just went out left the

door ajar, and as you were good to me once before, I made bold to come again," returned the woman, humbly.

"I should say you *had* made bold. Are you in the habit of entering houses in this way?" Mrs. Langley questioned sarcastically.

Selma's eyes flashed, an angry glow came to her cheek, and she drew her form as proudly erect as if she had been her interrogator's equal.

"No," she said, as she bent a peculiar glance upon her companion's face; but—*something that I could not resist drew me to you.*"

Helen Langley shivered slightly at the strange words so strangely emphasized.

"What do you want?" she asked in a subdued tone.

"Employment. I am fully acquainted with all the duties of lady's-maid. I can sew nicely; I can read well."

"Have you been in New York ever since I met you before?" Mrs. Langley asked, and yet she could not have told why she put the question.

"No, honey. I—have been *in Kentucky* a part of the time."

"In Kentucky!"

Mrs. Langley caught her breath as she repeated the words.

"Yes, honey," and the woman's voice was liquid in its sweetness, her eyes glowed like beads of jet, and a strange smile wreathed her lips.

The colonel's proud wife threw up her head haughtily.

She wondered why she did not turn the creature out of doors instantly, but some potent influence restrained her.

"Why do you address me so familiarly? Why do you come to *me* for employment?" she demanded.

"Why did I call you 'honey?' Because it came natural to me, I suppose. Why did I come to you? I had to go to some one, and something *drew* me to *you*, I told you."

Mrs. Langley shrugged her graceful shoulders as if to rid herself of some unpleasant sensation.

"You can read, you say?" she said, changing the subject.

"Yes'm," the woman answered, looking straight into the eyes bent upon her, while her whole face hardened. "I was once a slave, but I was very handsome, and—I fared better, *in some respects*, than the most of my race."

Helen Langley did not know, until long afterward, the meaning of those shivers which ran down her spine as this woman spoke to and looked at her so strangely.

But it was easy to see that she had told the truth, for traces of great beauty still remained about her, while the language she used was well chosen, and her whole appearance far above her class.

"Well, I need no one now—I have a maid," Helen replied, beginning to be nervous and anxious to get rid of her visitor.

"If madam cannot hire me herself, will she recommend me?"

"How can I do that, when I know nothing about you? But perhaps I will send you some sewing in a few days."

"I have spent my last cent for my breakfast this morning," Selma said, briefly.

Mrs. Langley thought a moment, then drew out her purse, from which she took five dollars, and gave to her.

And she had turned her own brother's wife penniless from her door, giving unhesitatingly to a stranger, of whose worthiness she was entirely ignorant.

Selma took it with a low "thank you," and turned as if to go.

But as she reached the door she looked back, saying with marked emphasis:

"Madam, I live at No. 8 —— Street," and then she disappeared.

Helen Langley lifted her hands and pressed them to her temples as the door closed.

"What is it that haunts me thus?" she said, with a look that was almost wild. "Why does my flesh shiver and creep, my heart quake, before such a creature as that? I cannot understand it."

CHAPTER IX.

A GREAT BURDEN LIFTED.

WHEN Cecile reached the St. Nicholas again, after her interview with her husband's sister, she retired at once to her bedroom, where she remained alone for more than an hour, and no one save herself and God ever knew how that interval of time was spent.

When she reappeared Martha, whose own heart was nearly ready to break with sympathy for her mistress, involuntarily uttered a low cry at the change in her.

It was as if she had fought some terrible battle, coming forth from the ordeal weak, exhausted, and with the look of one ten years older.

But there was an expression of firm resolve about her small mouth, and a steadfast purpose in her dark blue eyes.

She was no longer the petted darling of an idolizing husband, whose only thought was to shield her from every care and sorrow, who was always planning some pleasant surprise for her—something to make each new day brighter than the last. She was a lonely, sorrowful woman, with the burden of a great grief crushing her almost to the earth, and with the stern fact staring her in the face that upon her depended the support of herself and her child—upon her, who had never performed an hour's real labor in her life!

"I am going out again for a little while Martha," she said, quietly, "and if Dr. Mortimer should call you will say to him that I should like to see him this evening, if he will be at liberty."

"Yes'm," the girl answered, the tears starting to her honest eyes at the hopeless tone in which her mistress spoke.

Cecile stooped to kiss her babe, who lay sleeping on the sofa, and then went out.

In her hands she carried a box and a package.

She went directly to a large establishment, where all kinds of fancy goods for ladies were kept for sale, and where she used to trade occasionally in her palmier days.

She asked to see the proprietor, and was shown into a private room, where an elderly, pleasant-faced gentleman sat reading a newspaper.

He arose and bowed politely as she entered, recognizing at once the fact that he stood in the presence of a lady.

Cecile gave him her card.

"I have come upon a strange errand perhaps," she said, entering at once upon the object of her visit, "and if you cannot help me yourself, you may at least be able to direct me to some one whom you think will do so."

"Pray be seated, madam," the gentleman said courteously, and instantly attracted by that beautiful, high-bred face with its mournful eyes and quivering lips.

He saw at once that she was in some deep trouble, and he possessed one of those rich, generous natures that are always ready to reach out a helping hand to the needy.

He wheeled a chair forward for her as he spoke.

"Thank you," Cecile said, and sank wearily into it.

The excitement of the morning had nearly exhausted her strength.

"I have just returned from abroad," she resumed, after a moment, "where I have been traveling for more than a year with my husband. I—I was so unfortunate as to lose him just before sailing, and I find myself suddenly reduced to the necessity of doing something for my own and my child's support. I have no friends—I have no money, but I have some very beautiful foreign treasures which my husband purchased for me while we were away. I have among other things some very fine laces, which I thought I might possibly dispose of to you, as you deal in such articles."

"Um——" remarked the gentleman, reflectively, as he stroked his long gray beard, "what did you say your husband's name was?" and he began to look about for the card which she had given him.

She saw that he was somewhat distrustful of her, and she did not wonder at it, although the fact touched her pride, and a beautiful flush came into her pale cheeks for a moment.

"Montgomery," she answered, briefly.

"Mrs. H. Montgomery," the merchant read, having found her card.

He started and looked at her questioningly.

"You cannot mean that you are Mrs. Howard Montgomery?" he exclaimed, astonished.

"Yes, sir," she answered, and a hard, dry sob which she could not repress broke from her lips.

"And you were Cecile Vavasour before you were married?" he continued, in a gentle, pitying voice.

She bowed her head in assent, her eyes growing wild with the pain she was suffering and the self-control she was striving to exercise.

"Excuse my questions—I know they must pain you," he said in tones of sympathy. "I had not heard of your bereavement; I knew nothing of the circumstances of your marriage, and—your father once did me a favor, at a trying time, which I shall never forget. Yes—yes," he went on hastily, as he saw those lovely lips quiver. "I will do anything I can to help you. Let me see your laces, please."

Cecile, glad of any change that would keep her from breaking utterly down in his presence, as she felt that she should do if he went on in that kindly strain much longer, unfolded her package and took out two good-sized boxes.

Lifting the covers of these, she displayed treasures indeed—a shawl of finest point lace, such as was not often seen even in extravagant New York: fichus, collars, flounces, handkerchiefs, and yards of the most delicate edgings, of various patterns and widths.

It was a collection such as only an unlimited purse could buy and the most perfect taste select.

"Mrs. Montgomery, I do not believe that there is another woman in New York of your age who can boast of laces like these," Mr. Simons said, in astonishment, and

gazing with intense appreciation upon the beautiful things before him.

Cecile sighed.

There certainly was not a woman in New York at that moment who would glory less in the possession of them.

Howard would purchase them for her; she had not cared for so many nor such costly articles; but nothing was too beautiful or expensive for his darling, and he had poured out his money like water for her.

"Do you know the cost of all these?" the merchant inquired, after another half-hour spent in examining them.

"The price is marked on each piece in francs; you can easily estimate it," Cecile answered.

The gentleman took down the figures and added them.

"Mrs. Montgomery, I find them worth a trifle under fifteen hundred dollars," he said, "and the prices compare very favorably with those which we have been paying at wholesale, and we import all our own laces, you know."

"I know that they cost a great deal," Cecile replied, with another sigh, and thinking how much good fifteen hundred dollars would do her just now; but she did not dream of realizing anything like what the laces were worth.

Mr. Simons noted the sigh and surmised its cause, and his generous heart was filled with sympathy for her.

"I will tell you what I will do," he said, after thinking awhile. "My daughter is about to be married, and doubtless expects something handsome in a paternal way. She shall not be disappointed. The shawl, flounces, handkerchiefs, and this piece of edging I will take for her, paying you outright for them. The remainder, with your permission, I will put into my salesroom and allow you whatever they may bring."

"Oh! sir, you are too kind; I did not expect—I shall be more than satisfied with just what they cost," Cecile faltered, nearly losing her self-control again at this unexpected kindness.

Mr. Simons smiled with a kindly gleam in his eyes.

"I am afraid that if we all did business in that way we should not make much progress financially," he said.

He then arose and went to his desk and counted out a roll of bills, which he brought and handed to her.

"There are eight hundred and twenty-five dollars—the price of my daughter's wedding finery; and now I will give you a memorandum of what remains, and you shall have what they bring as fast as they are sold."

He sat down, turning his back to her, so that she need not think he noticed the great tears that were rolling down her cheeks.

She had not been able to weep before—her grief had been too deep for tears; but now, thankfulness toward this noble-hearted man had touched the hidden springs, and she could not keep the diamond-drops back.

Never before had she known anything like the feeling she was now experiencing; never before had she known what it was to want for a dollar—ay! hundreds, if she had wished them—nor had she realized the value of money until this moment.

She clasped it tightly in her hands—that precious roll of bills; she was no longer penniless; she could liquidate her obligations to Dr. Mortimer; her baby would not suffer, for now she could provide for it a home, care, and all the comforts to which she had been accustomed—at least for the present.

"Is there anything else that you would like to dispose of?" Mr. Simons asked, as he handed her the list he had made out, and glancing at the other package which she had brought.

"Yes," she returned, "but jewelry is hardly in your line of business; however, I will show you what I have, and perhaps you can advise me how to dispose of it to the best advantage."

She untied the other parcel and displayed several sets of elegant jewelry, carved corals, and cameos from Naples; Roman and Florentine mosaics, and a set of queer dead-gold ornaments which looked as if they belonged to the ages gone by.

Mr. Simons seemed much pleased with them; he was

evidently a lover of these small feminine fancies, and he asked many questions regarding them.

He took two sets, for his wife and daughter, and kindly offered to dispose of the others for her.

Cecile gave the merchant her hand as she arose to go, and he marveled at her great beauty and queenly appearance, even though he saw that she was suffering under a burden of sorrow almost too heavy to be borne.

"Mr. Simons," she said, "I am very grateful to you for your kindness to me to-day. When I came to you hope and courage were well-nigh dead within me, but your generosity and sympathy have made me brave to face the battle of life once more."

The merchant's eyes grew moist at her words, and he detained the hand she had given him.

"My child," he said, almost tenderly, "my daughter, I judge, is about your own age, and your sad face touches my heart in a tender spot, and I have been impelled to do for you as I should wish another to do by her in a like position. But will you not confide in me a little more fully? Your father and I were friends—let me be *your* friend also. I do not understand the necessity which has brought you here to-day. I thought Mr. Montgomery was very wealthy; I *know* that he has a sister—Mrs. Colonel Langley, who is—and it seems to me cruel, uncalled for, that you should be obliged to part with these beautiful things which your husband gave to you. If you are in any difficulty which I can help you out of, be sure I shall be very glad to do so."

Cecile could not resist this kind appeal—the compassionate gleam in the old gentleman's eyes, and the tender, winning cadence of his voice; and resuming her seat, she told him all her trouble, passing as lightly as she could, and be truthful, over Mrs. Langley's treatment of her that morning.

Mr. Simons listened in amazement.

He could not believe that Howard was dead, but his absence was certainly most unaccountable, and he had no solution to offer to the mystery.

"I shall send an agent abroad the first of next month,"

he said hopefully, "and he shall look into the matter; I will do all that I can for you, my child. But about this matter of your support—that we can easily arrange, I am sure. There will be no trouble about your identity, and you are, of course, entitled to a generous income from your husband's property—any lawyer would grant you that. I will institute inquiries about Mr. Montgomery's man of business, see him myself for you, and you shall have your just due. I am astonished, to say the very least, at the position Mrs. Langley has assumed toward you."

"Mrs. Langley is very proud, and she objected to my marriage with her brother," Cecile returned with heightened color.

"On what ground, if I may presume to ask? Some of the best blood in the country flows in the Vavasour veins," said Mr. Simons, with considerable spirit.

"She was opposed to me on account of my lack of fortune."

"Um; there are some attributes more essential than gold, some of which I am inclined to think that Mrs. Langley herself may lack," the merchant remarked, with an appreciative glance into Cecile's beautiful, intelligent face.

"But never mind that now," he added; "come to me again in a few days, Mrs. Montgomery, and perhaps I may have some cheering news for you."

Cecile was greatly comforted. Mr. Simons seemed like a tower of strength to her; he had been a friend of her father's, and that fact made him seem less of a stranger to her.

She wondered what favor her father could have rendered him that made him so ready and eager to help her; but she could not ask, and she went away, a great burden lifted from her heart, more hopeful than she had thought it possible ever to feel again when she had come there—a thousand dollars in her purse, and the promise of as much more at no distant day.

CHAPTER X.

SAD PARTING.

WHEN Cecile arrived at the St. Nicholas upon returning from her interview with Mr. Simons, she found Dr. Mortimer in her parlor waiting for her.

"I am obliged, unexpectedly, to return to California to-morrow morning," he said, glancing at a telegram which he held in his hand, "and as I had previously made an engagement for this evening, I waited for you, as Martha told me you wished to see me."

Cecile's face expressed regret at the intelligence of his near departure. He had been such a comfort to her; his was such a strong, true nature to lean upon in a time of trouble, that it made her very sad to have him go.

The color had flashed into her white face while he was speaking, and she had a half-guilty feeling lest he should suspect the nature of the errand which had taken her out a second time that day.

But of course he did not, and sat talking for some time to her in a cheerful, soothing way, which made her realize all the more how much she should miss him when he was gone.

"I trust you found your friends well this morning," he said, casually, during their conversation.

"Quite well," she answered, briefly.

"I shall go home feeling quite relieved regarding you," he went on, "since I know that you have relatives here to care for you, and I doubt not they will arrange everything for your comfort."

"Thank you," Cecile, returned, in the same tone as before, though she wondered in her heart what he would say if he could know how she had been already received

by those "friends" to which he referred; then she added: "We also shall leave here to-morrow morning;" and Martha in the adjoining room, hearing this, wondered where they were to go, and how the future would be provided for.

"Do you remain in the city?" Dr. Mortimer asked.

"For the present, yes," she said; then looking up at him, and speaking with a quiver in her voice, she went on: "I am very sorry to have you go—I shall be sorry to say good-by to you; but I trust you may have a pleasant trip over the plains; and—Dr. Mortimer, I can never tell you how grateful I am to you for your exceeding kindness to me in my trouble."

She faltered and could not go on.

"Do not mention it, Mrs. Montgomery," he said, quickly; "it has been a pleasure to me—though a sad one, of course—to do what I could for you; and I trust that when we meet again—if ever we shall—I shall find you far happier than I leave you. Do not let your heart fail you," he continued, in grave, sweet tones; "be of good courage, for there is One who 'doeth all things well.' We cannot always know or see why God allows such heavy trials as yours to to come into our lives sometimes, to blight them; but we *shall* know by and by, and in the knowing lose all pain."

"You always have something comforting to say to me," she answered, tears springing to her eyes; but resolutely preventing their falling, she drew from her pocket the roll of bills which Mr. Simons had paid her, saying: "Now if you will please tell me the amount of my indebtedness to you I will cancel it."

Dr. Mortimer flushed.

He could not bear that she should be annoyed with business affairs when her heart was so sore from her trouble, and somehow it was obnoxious to him to take money from her.

"Is it quite convenient?" he asked, as he named the sum he had paid out for her.

"It is perfectly convenient," she replied, with a slight

uplifting of her golden-crowned head, and she laid the bills in his hand as she spoke."

His quick eye told him that she held no small amount even after paying him, and he thought, with a sense of relief, that her friends, whom she had visited that morning, must have supplied her with all the funds that she needed, and that all trouble, financially, would be smoothed from her path in the future.

He little realized how forlorn the future appeared to this young and delicately nurtured woman, and that when this money, which she had realized from the sacrifice of her treasures, was gone, she did not know where she could look for more.

But she was much too proud to allow him to suspect anything of the kind. She could not accept charity even from one who was so kindly disposed toward her as Dr. Mortimer had shown himself to be.

He sat talking with her some time longer, and when at length he arose to go, he took her hand in both his own.

"Mrs. Montgomery," he said, sadly, while a wistful look came into his eyes, "I regret more than I can tell you to bid you farewell. I have almost grown to feel, during the last fortnight, as if you in some measure belong to me. I suppose such a feeling would naturally spring from the care and interest I have had for you; and I shall look back upon our short but sad acquaintance with a geat deal of gratification. Let me beg that if you ever stand in need of a friend again, you will not hesitate to call upon me. I shall be only too happy to respond to such a call at any time, and under any circumstances."

"Thank you," Cecile returned, striving in vain to control the quivering of her lips and her faltering tones. "I shall never forget you, nor what you have done, and I will not forget your kind offer for the future."

"I shall feel anxious to know of your happiness and prosperity. Will you let me hear from you if—will you write and tell me if your husband returns, so that I may rejoice with you?" he asked, gently.

"Yes, if Howard comes back to me I will write you at once; but," and her tone rang with despair, "Dr. Mortimer, *he will not.* I believe that he is dead; that some terrible accident befell him—something perhaps that I shall never know about—or he never would have failed to reach the vessel in time."

Her face was so white and hopeless, her eyes so like those of some fawn mortally wounded, that his heart ached for her.

"Do not be so despairing," he said, soothingly, while his own grew moist from sympathy. "I cannot agree with you. I believe that Mr. Montgomery *must* return, and that you will be very happy once more. But I must leave you now; and let me charge you again—do not forget, my dear friend, that I will come to you, do anything for you, at your lightest bidding."

"You are very kind; I will not forget," she said, while her eyes met his thankfully, trustfully, but with such a look of despair in their azure depths that it haunted him for months afterward.

"May I see Daisy for a moment?" he asked as he released her hand, but he spoke with difficulty.

He had not realized until that moment how sad this parting was going to be.

Cecile went into the next room and brought the little one to him.

He clasped her close in his strong arms.

"I cannot tell you how deeply attached I have become to this small darling," he said, with unsteady lips; and then to conceal his emotion, he bowed his manly head over the sunny-haired, laughing child, and kissed her repeatedly!

After a moment or two he gave her back, saying once more:

"For the sake of this child, remember that I am *always* your friend."

"I will remember," Cecile answered, while something like a sob choked her utterance, and then after one more hand-clasp he went away, while the stricken young mother, feeling as if her last and only support was taken

from her, clasped her baby to her bosom convulsively, and moaned:

"We must fight the battle out alone, my darling, you and I, and God only knows what the result may be."

The next morning Cecile went out again and was gone many hours.

This time she was searching for a home for herself and small family.

She found at last just what she wanted—a few furnished rooms in a quiet but respectable street, and these she engaged at once, paying a month's rent in advance.

Then she returned, settled her bill at the hotel, and repaired to her new home with a feeling of independence and content which surprised herself.

It was very humble and mean compared to what she had always been accustomed, but it was her own; no weight of obligation rested upon her, and while her money lasted she need depend upon no one.

Meanwhile she intended to take measures to obtain an income from her husband's property, and if successful her purpose was to return immediately to Liverpool, to learn, if possible, Howard's fate.

"Martha, do you understand housework?" she asked, when they were somewhat settled in their new domicile.

"Yes'm; I can cook, and wash, and iron, and," with a fond look at Daisy, "you already know how well I can tend a baby."

"I know that you have been just as kind as kind can be to us both ever since our trouble," Cecile responded with emotion, adding:

"I am going to tell you exactly how I am situated, and then you can remain with me, or I will help you to get a place where you can command higher wages than I shall at present be able to give you. You were present during my interview with my husband's sister; you know how she scorned me, and refused me aid of any kind—even the name of my husband's lawyer. I have raised some money on some costly articles which I brought from abroad, and we shall do very well for awhile. If I can arrange for an

income from Mr. Montgomery's property there need be no fear for the future; but if I should fail to do so I shall then be driven to the necessity of going to work to support myself."

Martha opened her eyes wide at this.

"Madam! what could *you* do?" she asked in surprise, as she glanced at her delicate hands, her young beautiful face, and her slender form.

"I do not know; I have never done any work in my life, but there are thousands of girls in this city not as old as I who labor for their living, and I can at least *try*, if I am obliged to," Cecile answered, with brave earnestness.

"Of course," she continued, after a moment or two of thought, "I could not take care of Daisy and work too, so I wish to propose to you to remain with me, care for her, and keep house for me—for whatever wages you may think just—while I earn the money to support us."

"Oh, madam, I will do anything for you, you have been so kind and gentle to me! I would rather stay with you for whatever you can afford to give me—were it ever so little—than to go among strangers for a large sum," the honest girl returned, tearfully.

"I know your sympathies are with me," Cecile said, sadly, and deeply touched by her words, "but you have come to this country to earn your own living, and I must not allow you to sacrifice your own interests for me. I hope, however, I shall be able to do for you as well as any one could; a little while will decide the matter; meanwhile I have hired these simply-furnished rooms, thinking it best to be careful until I am sure of the future. I know nothing about housework, and I shall be obliged to depend entirely upon you, and while I am waiting for the result of my plans regarding Mr. Montgomery's lawyer, you shall teach me what you know, so that I need not be so useless if misfortune continues to follow me."

Cecile spoke very gravely and thoughtfully.

She wondered how she could have lived so long with-

out understanding something of the realities of life—without comprehending, from the condition of those around her, that this world is not a bed of roses, upon which one may lie forever at ease, without coming in in contact with their thorns.

"If Daisy lives to grow to womanhood," she thought, "I will teach her to work; she shall have some duties every day to fulfill; she shall learn the value of money, and that *some one*, if not she herself, has to earn every dollar that is expended for her comfort and pleasure. It is a mistaken kindness to allow any one to drift along as I have drifted, with no sense of personal responsibility save one's own enjoyment."

CHAPTER XI.

"WHERE ARE YOU?"

A WEEK later Cecile returned to Mr. Simons to ascertain if he had any news for her.

He told her, with a very grave face, that he had discovered who Howard's lawyer was only three days previous, and that at that time he lay at the point of death. He had died since then—was, in fact, to be buried that very day, and, of course, it would be impossible to do anything about an income for her just yet.

He thought, however, there would be no difficulty about it, and he would attend to the matter just as soon as propriety and a proper respect for the dead would allow.

But when next she saw him he was not so hopeful.

Colonel Langley, he said, had assumed the management of all his brother-in-law's affairs, and would look after his interests until his return, or he received some communication regarding his wishes.

He refused—probably at the instigation of his wife—to listen to Cecile's claim, saying that under the peculiar circumstances of her return he did not feel at liberty to pay over any money to her without first consulting Mr. Montgomery.

Mr. Simons had used all his eloquence in Cecile's favor, but without avail; he had then threatened the obdurate man with the law, but he had said she could have no right to any portion of her husband's fortune unless she could prove his death, and herself a widow; and thus that hope was cut off, and with it all thought of returning to Liverpool to try to learn Howard's fate.

For another week she was nearly ill from anxiety. Something must be done to meet this emergency; her

present funds would not last always, and she must arouse herself and bend all her energies to provide for the future.

But *what* to do? was the question.

Night after night she lay awake trying to think of something at once profitable and practicable.

"There is not a single useful thing that I know how to do," she had told Mr. Simons, when consulting with him about the matter. "I cannot teach, for although I have had every advantage in the way of an education, I was merely a receptacle for knowledge—I was not trained to communicate what I received; besides, I know I am not strong enough physically. It would be the same with music; I should starve if I tried to earn my living by sewing, and I'm sure I do not see that I am fitted for anything."

"It is a hard case, my child," Mr. Simons said, sympathizingly; "and that sister of your husband's is a monster in human form. But we'll see what can be done for you, if—you have no false pride about working for your bread."

He looked at her keenly as he said this.

She lifted her head with conscious dignity.

"No, sir; I am willing to work—I shall be *proud* to be able to support myself and my child; and I will gladly avail myself of anything which you may recommend me to do," she answered with animation.

"That is spoken like a noble woman," Mr. Simons returned, rubbing his hands together with a satisfied air, and giving her a glance of admiration.

In spite of her sadness Cecile was very, very beautiful. Her fair face was daily assuming more character; there was a thoughtfulness in her eyes which lent them an added charm; her bearing was more dignified and self-reliant; while the black garment which she always wore now—although she did not assume widows' weeds—she could not do that without proof positive of Howard's death, even though she feared such must be the fact—were extremely becoming to her pale loveliness.

Mr. Simons was deeply interested in her; every day

he found some new trait to admire in her, and he had determined to help her to an independent position—if she proved herself ready to help herself—if for nothing more than to defeat Mrs. Langley's malicious spite against her.

"With such a spirit," he went on, "there is no question of success, if your health is spared. You shall hear from me again in a day or two; but before you go I have some more money for you; your laces are selling very well, and another set of your jewelry has been disposed of."

He paid her three hundred dollars more, and she went away feeling quite hopeful, although as yet nothing definite had been determined upon.

Mr. Simons, however, had a plan in mind for her, but he did not wish to unfold it to her until he had tested her powers a little.

He had noticed from the first how tasteful she was in every appointment of her dress; the lace at her throat was always gathered into such a graceful knot; the ties of her hat were always fastened in such a dainty bow; and whenever she took anything into her slender fingers, he saw that she instinctively arranged it in some pretty, artistic way.

One morning, a day or two after the above conversation, he sought her at her own home.

"Mrs. Montgomery," he said, opening a box filled with delicate laces, ribbons, and flowers, "we are about to go into fancy neck-ties, *jabots*, breakfast-caps, etc., pretty extensively, and I want you to make us up some samples. You have taste, or I am greatly mistaken; you have had an opportunity of seeing all those recent pretty things which they manufacture so extensively in Paris, and I believe they can be made here just as well as to import them. I want you to do your very best for us, and if our plan is a success, I think, perhaps, you will have found the 'work' which you seek."

He gave her minute directions concerning what he wished to have made, and then went away, leaving her

lighter of heart than she had been any day since landing in New York.

Here was something tangible—something that promised employment and remuneration; and it would be such pretty, enjoyable work, too.

Her fingers were, indeed, very cunning, as Mr. Simons had surmised, and under their magical manipulations, lovely ties, pretty caps and dainty headdresses grew very rapidly, and when the merchant saw them he was more than satisfied with the result of his "plan."

"I wish you had a dozen pair of hands," he said, "and we would open a wholesale as well as a retail department of these things."

Cecile's face lighted with a sudden inspiration.

"I wish you would," she answered, eagerly, "and give me the contract to supply you. I would make all the samples, and hire young girls to imitate them in quantities; it would give me plenty of work, and also give me an opportunity to make something out of my employees."

Mr. Simons regarded her with surprise.

"I had no idea that you had such a head for business," he exclaimed, smiling at her eagerness. "I have half a mind to let you try it; but if you undertake this work you must have some place in which to carry it on, and I did not think you would like to leave your home."

"No, I should not," Cecile said, gravely, as she thought of Daisy; she could not go away and leave her child all day; she must have that careful training which only her mother could give her.

After a moment's thought her face cleared and she said:

"There is a large unoccupied room in the house where I live; if I could hire that, it would be just the place; it is pleasant and airy, and I could easily attend to my business and still be at home."

"Well, Mrs. Montgomery, if you can arrange things to your satisfaction, you shall have the contract for one

year; hire the vacant room at once if you can, and we will furnish it for you with the necessary tables, chairs, etc., and I will promise you if your work is as satisfactory as this"—pointing to the pretty things she had made—"all the business you want."

The kind merchant was glad to see her face light up with interest, the color flash into her cheeks, hope into her eyes, as the future began to brighten before her.

She went home and bargained for the vacant room with her landlady. Mr. Simons stocked it for her with chairs and tables for the workers, and even sent her a desk and a pretty clock.

An advertisement was inserted in one of the daily papers for girls to work on fancy ties, etc., and Cecile soon had her hands full, choosing her help from the crowds that poured in upon her, eager for employment.

She selected those who exhibited the most taste in their apparel, and thus in less than two months from the day of her landing in New York she had a room full of busy workers, and every week she turned out case after case of lovely *lingerie,* which ladies so much admire.

Every day she gathered new energy; her mind seemed eminently fitted for business, although she had never dreamed that she could do anything of the kind until necessity drove her to it.

She made all her own patterns; and such dainty, airy little things as they were, too; inspected every article as it came from the hands of the workwomen, to see that it was properly made, packed all into their respective boxes, and kept her own accounts.

It was a very busy life for her, a life so entirely different from anything that she had ever imagined possible for her that she often wondered if she were the same person who had been so dependent upon others for happiness, and indeed for everything in life.

And yet it was not an unhappy existence; she was earning an honest living; she was the means of giving work to many others who needed it and would otherwise perhaps be destitute, and it did her heart good every day

to look into those young faces, and watch the care fading out of them little by little as their earnings increased; the wolf was kept back, and they saw that their work was appreciated.

She had a kind word for them always. If she had cause to reprove for carelessness or idleness it was done so gently that none could take offense, yet so firmly that it was not repeated. She paid them a fair price—she, the oppressed, would not oppress—and they were eager to do their utmost to please her.

Mr. Simons was jubilant over her success; he was reaping a rich harvest from the arrangement without any of the annoyance of manufacturing, while he was gaining a reputation for producing the daintiest "nothings" in the world. His ties, caps, and so forth, were in great demand all over the city, and he was beginning to receive large orders from other States.

"Who does all this—who gets up all these delightful trifles?" asked Helen Langley one day of him, as she selected two charming breakfast-caps, a fichu, and some ties, paying a good round sum for the "style" as well as the material.

"A lady who came from Paris a few months ago," the merchant replied, chuckling to himself, and wondering if the "trifles" would appear so "delightful" in her eyes if she had known who had fashioned them.

"I might have known it." she said in a satisfied tone. "They have a decided French air; and it is such a comfort not to be obliged to order and wait to have what you wish imported."

A year went by, and at the end, when Cecile made up her accounts, she found a surplus in her favor of six hundred dollars; all this besides the necessary expenses of her business and the cost of her own household.

"God has been very good to me," she said, the thankful tears starting to her eyes as she sat over her books and looked upon these figures; "and yet," she added, wearily, "there is nothing that will ever ease the pain in my heart until I know my darling's fate.

"Will the time ever come?" she cried, lifting her

clasped hands in a burst of agony. "Must I go on forever, and never know? But for this suspense I could know some rest—some peace. The most horrible certainty would be more bearable than this constant surmising—this alternating of hope and fear."

She had received from Mr. Simons pay for all her laces and jewelry. Everything had been sold, and she had invested nearly the whole of it in the bank. She had now, or would have, when this six hundred dollars was put away, more than two thousand dollars at interest, and was in a fair way to add to it constantly.

"Yes, God is good!" she repeated, the tears rolling over her face like rain. "But oh! if it were not for my Daisy, life would not be worth the effort it costs to live it. Howard! oh, Howard! *where* are you? *What* has happened to you? Shall I never, never see you again?"

Mr. Simons' agent had been abroad and returned. He had spent a whole week in Liverpool, at his employer's expressed desire, striving to trace Howard Montgomery. But he met with no success. The hotel where he had stopped, with his family, had been burned, and the firm of whom he had purchased the shawls and rugs had failed, and their shop was occupied by a fruiterer, and he could not get the slightest clew to either the man or his fate.

"I shall go myself just as soon I can save money enough," Cecile had said to Mr. Simons, when he told her of the failure of his agent. "Love will direct me where no one else would think of going; and I shall never know one moment's peace until I learn what has become of my husband."

She was thinking sadly of all this as she sat there at her desk, with the results of her year of business before her, and wondering just how much money she would need to carry her through her proposed pilgrimage.

She knew that it would be very expensive, for she would be obliged to take Martha along with her to look after Daisy, while she prosecuted her search.

In the midst of these thoughts the door opened, and

Martha, with a white, frightened face, appeared upon the threshold.

Cecile looked up through her tears.

"Madam," said the girl, tremblingly, "a boy has just come from the store to tell us that *Mr. Simons is dead!*"

CHAPTER XII.

"YOU MUST TELL ME."

DEAD! Her best friend dead! Stricken down in an instant, without warning, without a thought but that life and health would be spared to him for many a year to come.

Cecile was almost benumbed by the intelligence which Martha brought her; but as soon as she could compose herself, she went below to interview the boy regarding the facts of the case.

He had been sent, he said, by one of the firm, to tell her that Mr. Simons had died a couple of hours ago—dropped dead in his counting-room while talking with some gentlemen, regarding a business matter.

Apoplexy, the physician, who had been hastily summoned to give assistance, said, had caused it, and he had passed away unconscious of any pain, or any idea that eternity was so near.

What would become of her now, without this kind friend to guide and counsel? Cecile asked herself again again.

Everything that he could do he had done to help her over the rough road of poverty and dependence, and she had learned to look up, to rely upon, and respect him almost as she would a father or an elder brother.

"He will not lose his reward," Cecile murmured through fast-falling tears. "Christ will not forget the 'inasmuch;' and the helping hand which this good man has extended has certainly saved one, at least, from hunger, and thirst, and cold."

She suspended all business while he lay dead. She went to the church and looked her last upon the kind face that would never beam upon her again; upon the

mute lips that would never more speak words of encouragement and counsel to her; and no sincerer mourner followed him to his last resting-place than that young and beautiful woman in whom he had taken so deep an interest.

Many would have become disheartened at this added blow—this removal of their only support.

Not so with Cecile, however. It only appeared to spur her on to greater activity in her own behalf, and to the development of greater resources than she had heretofore seemed to possess.

She rose superior to every misfortune, faced every obstacle with the spirit and courage of a hero, and with the determination to conquer in the battle.

It was as if she could say, with a faith that was almost sublime, those words of Milton:

> "I argue not
> Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot
> Of heart or hope, but still bear up and steer
> Right onward."

A week after the burial of Mr. Simons, she sought an interview with the other members of the firm, and proposed to assume the manufacture of the fancy goods which she had hitherto taken upon contract, receiving a certain sum per dozen just for making them up.

She now wished them to supply her with the necessary materials at importers' prices, thus allowing her a profit on the articles themselves, as well as upon the labor employed in their construction, while she would supply them as heretofore.

At first they demurred; but Cecile informed them that if she could not make this arrangement with them she should do so with some other parties. She knew that she was competent to manage such a business. She had her own interests to consider, and must make the most of her time and energies while they were spared to her.

Such a proceeding as this, the firm knew, would be of great injury to them. Her skill and work had acquired such a reputation that the demand for their goods was

rapidly increasing, and they could better afford to have her make the extra profit than they could to lose her altogether.

So they consented to the arrangement, and Cecile became a manufacturer and regular woman of business.

And all this time she was developing into greater beauty. Her active life, together with the employment which kept her from morbidly dwelling upon her trouble, secured health and strength to her, lent animation to her face, a keen, bright look to her eyes, dignity and self-possession to her manner.

She was like some fair, stately lily, and withal a gracious gentlewoman—a woman to respect and admire, to love and reverence.

Daisy was now a lovely child of a year and a half, and went prattling about the house, making music all the day, and thinking no one quite equal to her "pretty mamma," and "dear, dood Marfa," while she won the hearts of all who saw her.

One bright, warm day in the last of October Cecile declared that they all needed a holiday, and, packing a hamper with good things for their lunch, she took Martha and Daisy, and went to spend the day in Central Park.

She was very lovely in her thin, soft, black robes, and in her dainty white hat with its black velvet bows; and many an eye turned lingeringly after the trio, wondering who that beautiful young mother and exquisite child could be.

Daisy was nearly wild with joy at the sight of the grassy lawns, the green trees, and beautiful flower-plots; and Cecile was almost happy again as she looked into her little one's sparkling eyes, at her rosy cheeks, and heard her glad laughter ring out so merrily on the balmy air.

Martha, too, seemed filled with delight at this little change in their life, and was as proud of her lovely charge as if she had been the daughter of some queen.

The morning sped on golden wings, while they wandered hither and thither, thinking each avenue and

walk more beautiful than the last; indeed, Central Park had never seemed so delightful to Cecile as to-day—at least, she had never appreciated it as now. It was caused, probably, by her long absence and the monotonous life which she had been leading of late.

After lunch, she told Martha that she might hire one of the goat-teams for Daisy, and let her ride about for a couple of hours, while she would sit in the shade of some trees and read the new book which she had brought with her.

Martha went away almost as pleased as Daisy to test the powers of a pair of pretty white goats, and their gayly-painted wagon.

The day was unusually warm and bright for the season, and Cecile, lying back in her rustic chair, with no care and nothing to do, appreciated this pleasant idleness to the full.

The pure, clear air was almost like wine to her, making her cheeks glow, her eyes to sparkle; the bright sunlight, shining through the thick foliage, made fantastic shadows all about her, while the birds caroled sweetest music in the boughs over her head.

"It is a beautiful, beautiful world after all," she murmured; but even as she said it her red lips trembled, and a shade of pain chased the sparkle from her eyes.

She had thought to read far into her book to-day, but it lay neglected upon her lap, while her mind went back two years, to the time when she and her husband had wandered together through enchanted lands—when there was not a care for her—when every wish was anticipated, and the weeks and months were like a poem and a vision of delight.

"Oh! if I could *only* be certain of his fate, whatever it may have been, I could bear it better," she moaned, as her thoughts grew more painful and bitter.

This was ever her cry when she yielded to such sad musings, and she rebelled with all her soul against the mystery of Howard's fate.

"What a charmed life would nave been ours," she went on. "We were so united in heart and thought;

how he would have loved Daisy, and what pride and joy he would have experienced in watching her grow and develop. I feel that God knows best," she said, lifting her tear-laden eyes to the blue sky above; "but it is very hard to bear for all that. I suppose I needed this discipline—indeed, I know that I am a stronger woman for it, better fitted to battle against the realities of life, better fitted to rear and educate my child, and I do strive to endure it patiently. But, oh! I did love my husband with a devotion that was tender and true; ours seemed destined to be a perfect life, and, to have my cup of happiness dashed from my lips when it was filled to the brim was a bitter, bitter blow. But I will try to be thankful that my Daisy is spared to me; if *she* should be taken from me—oh, God! I could not bear that, too."

She broke off with a bitter cry at this thought.

For full two hours she had sat thus, never reading a word, while the past flooded her mind with its bitter memories.

Why it should have come upon her with such force on this bright, beautiful day, the first that she had devoted to rest and recreation since her return, was something she could not understand.

A shiver ran through her as the idea of losing her child shot into her mind; and as if fearful even then that something had happened to her, she started up to go in search of her."

Meanwhile, Martha had engaged the goat-team, and Daisy was having a most delightful time. She was satisfied to ride slowly, so that Martha could walk beside her, and she was perfectly happy to be allowed to hold the reins in her plump little hands like a "weal dwiver," while she watched her pretty white steeds trot ahead of her.

She made a lovely picture sitting in the gayly-painted wagon.

Her hair, a beautiful golden, a trifle darker than her mother's, was very long for one of her age, and floated over her shoulders in the breeze like "woven sunshine."

Her eyes, of a deep, dark blue, were very large and intelligent, while her face was remarkable for its delicacy and refinement.

She wore to-day a little dress of blue silk, daintily trimmed with white lace, a white sun-hat with blue ribbons, tiny kid boots of the same hue, fastened at the tops with bows of smooth shining satin.

Cecile took great comfort in allowing her exquisite taste to have full play in dressing her darling, and this she could easily do, with very little expense, out of the cast-off finery that had been hers during the days of her happy maidenhood, and which some spirit of economy had prompted her to store away in a trunk with other things before she went away.

While Martha and her charge were roving about at their own sweet will, they encountered in one of the shaded drive-ways an elegant carriage drawn by a pair of magnificent horses.

Two richly-dressed ladies were seated within, and appeared to be enjoying the day and place the utmost, as they rode slowly along.

"What a lovely child!" one of the ladies exclaimed, as they came in sight of Daisy.

"You say truly; and how happy the little darling looks," replied her companion, with a long-drawn sigh. "Stop a moment, John," she added to the driver, "and let us speak to her."

The well-trained horses came to an immediate halt, and the lady bent forward with a wistful look in her large, dark eyes.

"Little one," she said with a smile, "you are having a fine time, aren't you?"

"Me is a weal dwiver now," Daisy answered, looking up with an air of dignity, and drawing the lines more tightly over her small steeds.

The lady laughed musically.

"And do you like to be a real driver?" she asked.

"Me likes to be *any-fing we-al*," she returned, with emphasis.

"There's a lesson in a nutshell for you on meta-

physics," exclaimed the other occupant of the carriage, her face gleaming with amusement.

"Well," exclaimed the first speaker, heartily, "you are a *real* beauty anyway, and I love beautiful children."

Daisy looked up at her with wide, earnest eyes.

"*Mamma* loves weal *dood* dirls better," she said, as if that authority was sufficient to decide all questions knotty or otherwise.

"Who's your mamma, pretty one?—what is your name?"

"My name," answered the child, reflectively, while she shook the reins to frighten away the flies that were annoying the goats," my name is—Daisy."

"Daisy? You look like one, you blue-eyed darling; but—Daisy who?"

The stranger was deeply interested in the child, and her eyes lingered on her with an almost covetous expression in them.

"Daisy Mont-gomery."

The last was a long name, and she always hesitated when pronouncing it.

The woman in the carriage started as if something had stung her, and glanced quickly from the child to Martha, whom she had not deigned to notice before.

The girl, on the contrary, had already recognized her as Mrs. Colonel Langley, the woman who had so insulted and abused her kind mistress, and she would have been glad to have passed on without allowing her to speak to Daisy, if she could have done so without being rude.

Mrs. Langley now perceived that Martha was the same girl who had come with Cecile to her house more than a year ago, and the color flamed vividly into her cheeks as she recalled that interview.

"Where do you live?" she demanded, sharply.

"In West ——th Street," she replied, respectfully, and she could have bitten her tongue out for having told her; but she had replied unthinkingly.

"What number?"

"I—madam—I—Daisy, we must go to mamma now," the girl said, in confusion, while she attempted to make the child drive on.

"What number, girl?—you must tell me," Helen Langley said, with flashing eyes and imperative tone.

A sullen flush mounted to Martha's brow; she was not in the haughty woman's employ, and there was nothing to compel her to give the number of her mistress' residence if she did not choose.

"Eighty-four West ——th Street," lisped Miss Daisy, with all the artlessness in the world. Why, Marfa! you fordot," she added, with an air of superiority at having been able to tell what she thought she could not.

She had been taught the street and number by Cecile, who had said:

"If she should ever wander away and get lost, she can then at least tell where she lives."

Mrs. Langley shot a glance of triumph at Martha, as Daisy thus gave her the information she desired, drew forth some ivory tablets from her pocket, and wrote it down.

"You may drive on now, John," she said to the coachman, and the carriage passed while Martha went back to her mistress with her charge.

She did not tell her anything regarding this meeting, for she instinctively felt that it would be a disagreeable topic to Cecile, and she hoped that no harm would result from it.

CHAPTER XIII.

"I WOULD NOT TRUST HER WITH YOU."

A FEW days after Cecile's visit to Central Park Mrs. Colonel Langley's elegant carriage stopped before No. 84 West ——th Street, and Mrs. Langley herself sat therein.

She alighted, and mounting the steps rang the bell.

"Does Mrs. Montgomery reside here?" she inquired of the landlady, who answered her ring.

"Yes'm," was the reply, while the woman wondered what this grand lady could want with her quiet but pretty tenant.

"Show me to her rooms," commanded Mrs. Langley authoritatively, and the landlady, with an angry flush on her cheek at being thus addressed, turned to obey without a word.

After Helen Langley's interview with Cecile on that morning when she had come to her in her trouble, she had been nearly distracted on her brother's account.

In spite of her skepticism in Cecile's presence, she knew well enough that something must have happened to him, for he was not a man who would ever, under any circumstances, desert a woman in the way that she pretended to his wife to believe he had done.

Next to herself, he had been the only object on earth whom she had ever really loved, and she insisted that a search should at once be instituted for him, and an agent had been dispatched to Liverpool to hunt him up; but after a fruitless search of three months the man had returned, and the general belief among all his friends was that he was dead.

Colonel Langley and many others believed that he had been robbed and murdered, for if any accident had

happened to him there were papers about his person—aside from the steamer tickets which he had with him—which would have identified him, and they would doubtless have received some news of him long before this.

"Helen, I think we ought to make over Howard's fortune to his wife and child," he had said on more than one occasion, for his conscience often troubled him as he thought of that delicate girl struggling for the support of herself and little one.

But he was one of those men who have no decision of character, and are held in complete subjection by the stronger will, of their wives.

"Nonsense," she would impatiently reply, "that silly girl is no more competent to manage a fortune than her baby is; besides, we do not know where she is."

"Well, we can advertise; I do not feel right to keep this money from her," the colonel said uneasily.

"Advertise, indeed!" sneered Helen, "and have all New York inquiring what it means. It will do her good to feel the need of money after her haughty refusal of my offer to help her. If she had given me the child I would have done anything for her; but you should have seen how proud-spirited and overbearing she was, and the haughty way in which she rejected my overtures."

Mrs. Langley had given her own version of the interview to her husband, leading him to believe anything but the truth of Cecile.

When Mr. Simons had approached him upon the subject of giving the young wife an income from her husband's property Helen had vetoed it so indignantly that he dare not accede, saying that he could do nothing until he could learn something definite concerning Mr. Montgomery.

But Helen could not forget that beautiful child, and more than once she tried, in a sly way, to discover where Cecile lived, hoping to find her in such abject poverty that she would be glad to give Daisy up to her.

Since encountering the little one in Central Park she had not known a restful moment.

She was the most exquisitely lovely child she had ever

seen, and her heart yearned for her with a mighty longing—she coveted her as she had never coveted anything in her life before, and a wild desire—a determination to get possession of her in some way—took possession of her.

Daisy had appeared anything but the poverty-stricken child which she had imagined her to be when she met her that bright day in the Park, and this fact did not tend to make her any easier in her mind.

She wondered how Cecile managed to dress her so daintily, and above all keep a nurse for her.

It was a mystery tantalizing beyond endurance; therefore she resolved to make a voyage of discovery, and thus we find her seeking another interview with her despised sister-in-law.

When she was shown into Cecile's small but tasteful, even luxurious parlor, she looked around with unfeigned astonishment.

The room was almost artistic in its appointments, for Cecile dearly loved all things beautiful—they were almost a necessity to her, and as her business had been so prosperous she felt justified in making her home as attractive as possible, and she was determined to surround her child with all the refining influences in her power.

She was greatly assisted in this by the many treasures, pictures, statues, and articles of *virtu* that she had brought with her from abroad.

"Where on earth does she get all the money to buy these things?" Mrs. Langley exclaimed, staring blankly at a costly painting opposite her.

But before she could think of any solution to the puzzling problem the door opened and the object of her thoughts entered.

Cecile did not dream who her visitor was when the landlady had called her from her work-room and told her she had a caller waiting in her parlor.

She started visibly, flushed scarlet, then grew white as the dainty ruffle at her throat, as the thought flashed into her mind that perhaps Helen had come to bring her some news of her husband.

"Mrs. Langley! Helen! Have you heard anything about Howard?" she asked, in a low, strained tone, as she sank into a chair, feeling too weak and faint to stand.

"Of Howard? What should I hear of him?" demanded Mrs. Langley, coldly, while she gazed, as if fascinated, at Cecile. She seemed to be more beautiful every time she saw her.

"I do not know, of course, only I could imagine no other reason to bring *you* here," she answered, with a slight emphasis, and instantly regarding her self-possession.

Her momentary hope had been destroyed, and she realized that her husband's sister had sought her for no unselfish motive, and braced herself for a disagreeable interview.

"I will tell you presently why I have come," Helen responded, coolly. "But," glancing again about the pretty room, "really, Cecile, how very comfortably you are fixed! How did you manage to get all these nice things?"

Cecile's eyes glowed.

"I *earned* most of them, Mrs. Langley," she returned, proudly.

"*Earned* them! How, pray?" was the skeptical reponse, while she eyed the fair girl suspiciously.

Cecile colored vividly at her tone.

"By honest labor with both hand and brain," she answered, briefly.

"I do not believe it. You were never taught to work, and girls like *you* do not *work* for such things as these," Helen Langley retorted, insultingly, and glancing around the room.

Cecile rose at this, her face like a snow-flake in its whiteness, her eyes gleaming with a fire such as the woman before her had never believed they could emit.

"Mrs. Langley," she said, icily, "my time is valuable. If you have any business with me you will please state it at once. I usually receive all business calls in the wareroom below, where my goods are made; but since you are here, I will listen to you."

Helen opened her eyes at this.

"In the wareroom below," Cecile had said. What could the girl be in, that she talked thus like a man about the manufacture of goods?

"What do you mean? What do *you* have to do with a 'wareroom'?" she asked, curiously.

"I do not know that I feel called upon to enter very minutely into details," Cecile said, with dignity. "Suffer me to say, however, that when you drove me so heartlessly from you in my dire necessity, you unconsciously rendered me the greatest service in your power; you drove me to *self-dependence*, and led me to discover that in my character which I never dreamed that I possessed—courage, resolution, and a reserve power that has enabled me to rise to a position where *I do not need help* from any one."

"*How* have you done this?" Helen asked, regarding her wonderingly.

"With these hands," she returned, holding out those white, delicate members with a proud smile, "and," touching her gleaming forehead with one slender finger, "with these brains."

"Yes, but *how*, I ask?" Mrs. Langley demanded impatiently. Her curiosity was aroused to the highest pitch.

"That does not signify—at least to you," Cecile answered coldly; "the fact remains that my means are ample for all my needs. Now, what can I do for you?"

Her visitor did not feel very comfortable to be told all this; it did not augur well for the success of her errand.

"I came to see if I could not help you in some way," she said; but her eyes drooped guiltily beneath the smile of scorn which curved Cecile's red lips at the idea of such tardy assistance, and a crimson flush mounted to her brow.

"Did not Martha tell you that I met her in the park last Tuesday?" she continued, trying to recover herself.

"No; she said nothing to me. She probably did not recognize you, and I do not *need* any help, Mrs. Langley." This last with freezing politeness.

Helen's eyes flashed; but she thought best to control her temper just then, and she ignored those last proud words.

"Yes, she did recognize me," she returned, "for I spoke to both her and Daisy. Did the child say nothing of the meeting?"

"No; she told me nothing."

"Well, it was that circumstance which brought me here to-day," Mrs. Langley said somewhat nervously. "Martha would not give me your address, but Daisy knew it and told me, and that was the way I found you out. The child is lovely, Cecile, and she won my heart at once. It struck me that, situated as I am, I can do much better for my brother's child than you, who have to struggle for your living, earning it dollar by dollar—although I must confess that I am astonished to find that you have succeeded so well. I have come to offer to adopt Daisy—— Hear me out!" she broke forth eagerly, as Cecile's blanching lips opened to utter an indignant protest. "I will legally adopt her; she shall be in every respect as my daughter, and inherit my property as well as her father's, when we are convinced as to his fate. I will rear and educate her as you cannot possibly be able to do at your very best. I am the most suitable person to have the care of Howard's child, and you must give her to me, Cecile."

The woman had regained all her arrogance and self-assurance as she concluded.

Cecile heard her out, standing tall and stately as a young elm before her, her fair face and golden head gleaming above her black robes like a lily crowned with stars.

Her hands were loosely clasped in front of her, and though there was not a vestige of color in her cheeks, her voice was clear as a silver bell, and steady, as she replied:

"Mrs. Langley, doubtless you have not forgotten that you once proposed this same thing to me before, and I gave you my answer. It is needless for me to say that it will be the same to-day."

Mrs. Langley flushed angrily.

She remembered only too well Cecile's retort that day regarding her unfitness to be a mother, and it had rankled in her heart more than she would have been willing to confess to any one.

"You are selfish—you do not consider the welfare of your child," she cried.

"It is because I *do* consider the welfare of my child that I will not let you have her," Cecile returned, sternly. "No, if I were living on but a crust a day I would not trust her with *you*. It would be far better for her to suffer with me than to be reared to such poverty of soul as she would be in your care. But you are greatly in error. I am happy to say that I can give Daisy every reasonable comfort, and if I live she will be well educated—she will receive every advantage that the most exacting could desire. That will be my life-work, and to make her just the pure, tender, true woman that her father would have loved to have her grow to be, had he lived to watch her develop into maturity. God, in taking my husband, showed me that I had other duties. He has shown me, too, how to improve the talents He has given me, and, although Daisy should never have one dollar of Howard's property, she will have, if I continue to be prospered in the future, as I have been in the past, no mean inheritance when she reaches her majority."

Helen Langley sat there and heard all this, and wondering more and more how this slight, delicate girl could have accomplished so much.

All around her were evidences of prosperity, and she could not doubt the truth of what she had told her. Her own apparel, although simply made, was fine, and of the best material, while she looked and appeared every inch the cultivated lady, and fitted to shine in any sphere. Her child, she remembered, had been exquisitely dressed; she kept a nurse for her, and she could not understand how such a simple, inefficient girl, as she believed Cecile Vavasour to be, could have risen above misfortune, conquering fate as it were, in this way, working out her

own independence, when a year and a half ago she knew that she had not a dollar that she could call her own.

It was beyond her comprehension, and she realized at that moment that this lovely young mother was by far her superior in many ways. She recognized her as a perfect woman, nobly planned, more beautiful in form and feature than herself, her face shining with thought and intellect, while her self-reliance and dignity of bearing commanded her admiration even though she hated her for it.

"You are carrying things with a high hand, it seems to me," she said. "I suppose you would not let me have Daisy even if you knew Howard was living and desired it?"

Cecile caught her breath at this question.

Could it be possible that Helen had learned anything concerning Howard's fate, and was now trying to rob her of her child so as to keep his fortune in her family? If she was convinced that she really knew anything, she would have thrown herself at her feet, and begged her to make it known to her.

But one glance into her face was sufficient to tell her that she would get nothing from her; she had only referred to her husband to accomplish her own designs, if possible.

She knew that he could not have returned, for his first work would have been to search for her; besides she had searched the passenger list of every steamer that had arrived since her own return. Not because she really expected or hoped to gain any intelligence of him, but because some fascination always drew her eyes to those lists of names. But his was never among them.

"My husband would not wish you to have the care of his child; he would never give her to the tender mercies of a woman who had abused and insulted another in distress as you have insulted me. If this was your only errand to me to-day, I must tell you without further parley that you have utterely failed in it," Cecile said so coldly and decidedly that Mrs. Langley felt convinced that her case was hopeless.

Still she would not give up—she would try bribery.

"I will settle a handsome income on you, if you will consent, and you can come to see Daisy—occasionally," she said.

"A 'handsome income' *belongs* to me out of my husband's fortune," Cecile answered, with curling lips, "but you could not crush me, although you tried to do so, by keeping it from me; and some time, I warn you, I shall take measures to recover *all* that Howard would wish to be mine and Daisy's. But your heart must be harder than adamant to offer me such a bribe! I do not want anything from you—I have sufficient for all our needs;" and again Helen wondered how she had done this.

"You will not give Daisy, then, under any circumstances?" she demanded, with glittering eyes.

"Most emphatically *no!*" and Cecile's starlike face flashed defiance from every delicate feature.

Helen Langley arose and faced her.

"Twice you have dared to thwart me, Cecile Vavasour," she cried, hoarse with passion; "you married my brother in defiance of my wishes, and this resulted in estranging him from me, for *he* held himself bound to his troth in spite of all that I could say. To-day you refuse to give me his child, whom I should worship if I could have, and now I warn you, that if ever the opportunity comes when I *can* crush you—*I will do it!*"

She turned as she finished as if to go; but with a few swift, graceful steps, Cecile placed herself between her and the door, thus barring her exit.

Her bright head was raised like a stag's at bay; her eyes had grown almost black from the conflict of emotions within her, and her cheeks were a vivid scarlet.

She was gloriously, dazzlingly beautiful as she braced herself to do battle with her foe.

"Did you imagine for one moment," she asked, in low, concentrated tones, "that you could come here and wrest my only treasure from me? Did you think you could come, with impunity, into the home that I have made by the force of my will and perseverance, and insult me by offering me gold in exchange for my offspring? What do you take me for, to suppose that I would bar-

ter my own flesh and blood were I even starving, and were Howard Montgomery twice your brother?—it is a mystery to me how two natures in the same family could be so wholly unlike—his so gentle, noble and kind; yours so unfeeling and craven.

"You have little understood my character if you supposed I would tamely submit to the insults you have offered me to-day. Before my marriage—on that day—I bore your abuse in silence for Howard's sake; I loved him too well to pain him by revealing to him what a monster of inhumanity his only sister was. But now, with no one to protect me, I have my own interests to look after, my own battles to fight. I am able to do it—I *shall* do it.

"Now let this interview be our last—since you never seek me but to offer me abuse; never come to me again; I will not see you."

She stood aside for her to pass as she concluded, and Mrs. Langley, dumb with surprise at the girl's spirit, went out without a word, passed down the stairs, entered her carriage and was driven away; but her face was a dead white, while her black eyes looked the hate which she had not dared give expression to before the fierce and righteous indignation of the woman whom she had so outraged.

"I will crush her—I will crush her! then we will see how the battle for the child will come out," she muttered, as she rolled toward her palatial but lonely and childless home.

CHAPTER XIV.

STOLEN.

GIVE my baby, my treasure, my pure-hearted darling, to *her!* What evil spirit could have possessed her to come to me with such a proposition? Oh, God, grant that I may live to see my child a woman, so that she need not fall into the hands of any one so merciless and hard-hearted as Helen Langley is!"

These were some of the excited sentences to which Cecile gave utterance after the departure of her sister-in-law, while she walked back and forth in her little parlor with quick, indignant steps, blazing eyes and cheeks, and went over in her mind again that trying interview, and contemplated the fate that would be Daisy's if Mrs. Langley could have her way.

"She would dress her like a doll," she went on; "she would pet and spoil her one hour, and torture her the next with her ungovernable temper; she would foster in her a spirit of pride, vanity, and selfishness, and *starve* her heart and intellect. Oh, my darling! my darling! all that I have in this wide world to live for; I will give you a mother's fondest love, and while I will bestow upon you every good thing that I can, I will not spoil you; I will teach you truth and purity, self-sacrifice and *self-dependence.*"

A door opened at this moment, and a fairy form, in spotless white, and with floating golden hair, appeared in the aperture.

A few flying steps, a spring, and a glad cry, and the beautiful child was in her mother's arms.

Cecile hugged her close to her heart, and kissed the fair face and rosebud lips again and again.

"To think that any one should *dare* ask me to part

with my child!" was the passionate thought of her wounded heart.

Then she said aloud, in sweet, fond tones:

"Did my Daisy have a nice nap?"

"Yes, mamma; and Marfa has made me all clean. It's *nice* to be *clean*," and the little one spread out her hands, smoothing in a dainty way her immaculate dress.

She was very particular, this little "Goldilocks;" she was never contented to wear a garment that had a spot of any kind on it; she liked to be "clean," and was never happier than when arrayed in a fresh gown, no matter how simple the cut and make, and Martha took great pride in fostering this trait of character.

"Ah, my little one, if I can only keep you clean within!" Cecile murmured, winding her arms more closely about her.

"Mamma, what makes you look all—all lighted up?" Daisy asked, regarding her mother with wondering eyes, while she touched with one little finger Cecile's eyes and cheek, which still glowed from her recent excitement.

"All lighted up!" Cecile repeated, smiling at the quaint query.

"Yes'm; all bright and shining. Has the sun kissed you, mamma, to make you so pretty? I fink *you* are a 'we-al beauty anyhow,'" Daisy responded, imitating the tone and manner of Mrs. Langley when she made the same assertion regarding her a few days previous, when they met in the Park.

Cecile laughed a low, fond, amused laugh, as she again kissed the pretty lips of the lovely prattler.

"Little flatterer! what do *you* know about 'we-al beauty?'" she asked, and by degrees she drew from the child an account of her meeting with her aunt.

She afterward questioned Martha, and learned all about the interview.

Somehow it made her very uncomfortable; a sense of danger and insecurity took possession of her, and for a long time she could not endure to have Daisy long out of sight.

But the feeling gradually wore away; business de-

manded her care and attention; everything moved along smoothly and prosperously, and thus the months flew by without a cloud until Daisy's third birthday came around.

"Daisy shall have a pretty new doll for her birthday present, and we will go together and choose it to-day," Cecile said, giving her three loving kisses upon her red lips as she awoke that morning.

Accordingly, at eleven o'clock she ordered a carriage, and with her heart full of love and joy that she was able to contribute thus to her little one's pleasure, she set forth to make the proposed purchase.

When they reached the mammoth toy shop, it was delightful to watch the child's ecstacy as she wandered about examining the wonders of the enchanted place; and many who were selecting gifts for their own darlings at home stopped to observe the transport which this first visit to these heretofore unknown regions created.

The doll was at last selected and put into the arms of the happy child, and then Cecile repaired to a large dry goods establishment near by to do a little shopping for herself.

She lifted Daisy to a stool by the counter, and bade her sit still until she was through, which she was very willing to do, and devoted herself with a pretty, motherly air to the new treasure in her possession.

Cecile selected what she wished, and then stepped to another counter further down the store to examine some goods that had attracted her eye.

"Sit still, Daisy, till mamma comes back," she said, looking back over her shoulder as she went, while her heart thrilled at the pretty picture the child made tending her doll.

She purchased a nice dress for Martha, the kind, faithful girl who devoted herself to her; this occupied her about fifteen minutes, and then she went back to where she had left Daisy.

She was not there!

Cecile's face clouded; the child was not wont to disobey

her, and this first offense so soon after giving her pleasure hurt the fond mother.

Of course she could not be far off, she thought, and she began to look about the store.

It was very large, and the search occupied some time; but there were no signs anywhere of that dainty little figure in white, with those charming blue eyes and that floating golden hair.

Every clerk in the establishment was interviewed, but no one knew anything about the child; several had seen her sitting there by the counter with the doll in her arms, but did not remember seeing her get down from the stool.

As the unfruitful moments went by Cecile grew nearly distracted, and when all hope of finding her in the store was gone, she rushed into the street to look for her.

The coachman whom she employed had been sitting on his box before the door all the time during her absence, but he asserted that Daisy had not left the store; he was positive that he should have seen and recognized her if she had done so.

Cecile hailed the first policeman and begged information of him, but he had seen no child answering her description.

The anxiety and despair of the stricken mother can be better imagined than described.

The police were notified at headquarters, detectives were sent out, and everything that could be done was done, but without avail; Daisy could not be found anywhere, and Cecile was now robbed of her child as well as of her husband.

She had begun of late to experience something of hope and happiness for the future; her life was bound up in her sweet little daughter, and the occupation of rearing and educating her promised to be a source of delight to her. But now the world was once more a blank to her.

For three days and nights she neither ate nor slept; she walked her room in an agony of despair, heedless of all Martha's attentions and entreaties not to "give up heart," and refusing to be comforted.

The third afternoon had nearly drawn to a close, when she stopped all at once in the middle of the room, a sudden thought making her haggard face even more wan and ghastly, while with a sharp cry her hands flew up to her temples, as if it had pierced her brain.

"Why did I not think of it before?" she cried, wildly. "*Helen Langley has stolen my child!*"

"What is it?" Martha exclaimed, running in to her, and greatly startled by her wild words and wilder manner.

"Helen Langley has stolen my child," she repeated, with trembling lips; and Martha instantly burst into tears, believing that her dear mistress had gone mad with grief.

But Cecile, with quick, nervous motions, was arraying herself for the street; with this idea in her head, she had something tangible to act upon, and anything was more bearable than the intolerable suspense of the past three days.

"Bring me a cup of strong coffee, Martha," she commanded, feeling that she must have something to stay her waning strength; and when it was brought she drank it off like so much water, and then flew down into the street, hailed the first carriage she saw, and was driven with all speed to No. —— Fifth Avenue

"Is Mrs. Langley at home?" she demanded, with wild eyes and trembling lips, of the man who answered her imperative ring.

He regarded her with astonishment, almost tempted to believe her to be some escaped lunatic.

"No ma'm," he at length answered, "Mrs. Langley left for California Monday morning."

Monday morning!

Cecile uttered a low cry; that was the day Daisy had disappeared.

"What *time* Monday morning?" she questioned, excitedly.

"A little after ten," the man said, a feeling of pity stirring his heart at the sight of her agonized face and hueless lips.

Cecile pressed her hands to her temples; she thought she should go wild.

Mrs. Langley had started for the station a little after ten; Daisy had disappeared a little after eleven!

She did not know that she had any right to suspect her sister-in-law of having kidnapped her child, but somehow the idea had become fixed in her mind and she could not rid herself of it.

If Mrs. Langley had been driven directly to the station, she of course could have done nothing of the kind; but, if by any possibility she had first gone to Broadway, had passed the store where she had been shopping and had espied Daisy there, she felt sure that, with her intense longing to possess the child, she would have no more principle than to take her if she could do so without exciting suspicion.

The opportunity, too, was one not to be lost, for she was going to the far West, and she would doubtless think that no one would suspect her of the deed; and even if they did, it would be difficult to find her there.

"To what part of California has Mrs. Langley gone?" she asked.

"To San Francisco, I believe."

The waiter saw that she was a lady in spite of her excited manner, and he had not the heart to refuse to answer her questions.

"Will you give me her address?" Cecile asked, adding, "I have very important business with her."

"I do not know it," the man said.

"Is Colonel Langley at home—can I see him?" the anxious mother pursued.

"Colonel Langley is not at home; he was ordered to Washington a week ago, and Mrs. Langley's return is indefinite," said the servant.

Cecile turned and staggered down the marble steps to her carriage, weak, trembling, and sick at heart.

"Home—No. 84 West——th Street," she said to the driver, in a voice so hollow, and with a face so despairing, that he feared she should die before he could get her there.

It seemed to the distracted mother almost as if Heaven itself was against her; just as life had begun to assume something of comfort and prosperity, to have this crushing blow fall upon her was too cruel. What was her prosperous business to her—of what values were all the luxuries which she had acquired, the money she was yearly hoarding, except as they contributed to the welfare and future development of her idolized darling?

If she could not find her she knew she should die, or, worse, become a raving maniac.

Her faithful servant met her at the door when she returned with swollen, tear-stained face.

"Martha," Cecile said, gazing blankly at the nearly heart-broken girl, "I am going to California."

Martha gave a cry of dismay at this.

She was sure now that this last terrible trouble had turned the suffering woman's brain.

"Oh, madam," she cried, "you are ill—you are worn out; let me get you a fresh cup of tea, and there is a nice chicken that I cooked yesterday; you must eat something or you will famish."

She put Cecile into a chair as she spoke, and with trembling hands removed her hat and mantle.

"Yes," she said, "you may get me a good substantial meal, Martha, and I will try to eat, for I must have strength to accomplish what is before me; I start for San Francisco to-night."

Martha did not reply; she still believed that Cecile was wandering in her mind, and she had heard that it was not well to oppose the fancies of the insane.

But she hastened to get her a nice supper, and was greatly comforted, when she served it, to see her eat with something like relish.

And while she ate, Cecile told her of her suspicions and unfolded her plans.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FLIGHT.

"DAISY, I believe, has been stolen by that woman who wanted to adopt her so long ago," Cecile said, growing calmer, while she ate and talked, and gained something of hope and confidence while she confided her plans to Martha. "She has gone to California—left Monday, the very day that Daisy disappeared, and I must follow her immediately—I cannot live and not seek to know what has befallen her."

Martha begged her to tell her reasons for suspecting that Mrs. Langley had stolen her.

"I do not know—I have discovered no fact nor incident that should lead me to do so; but I do, nevertheless. I am *impressed* that she has taken her, but how or when she could have done it, in broad daylight, in that large store without being detected I cannot imagine. But the thought has burned itself into my brain, and I shall not rest until I know. I cannot remain here and be inactive; the police and detectives are all on the alert here, and I can, of course, do nothing, and I cannot *wait* and be still. I shall follow Mrs. Langley to California, and then I can easily ascertain if she has a child with her. If she has not, I shall be satisfied on that point and return at once; if I find that Daisy is with her, I shall seek Dr Mortimer's assistance, and he will help me to regain her."

Martha saw that she was bent upon going, and that it would be useless to try to dissuade her, and the more she thought of it the more she was inclined to approve of the plan. The journey would at least occupy her mind for a time, and prevent her wearing herself out with grieving.

"But what will become of the business while you are gone?" she asked thoughtfully.

"I shall be obliged to leave everything with you——"

"With *me!*" interrupted the girl in dismay; "surely, Mrs. Montgomery, you do not think of going to California alone! It would not be safe—oh! I should be distressed to death about you—you surely will let me go with you."

"But, Martha, it is very expensive traveling by rail to California, and I do not feel like affording to take you with me, much as I should like your companionship. I must husband my money, for I do not know what is before me, and I shall spend my last dollar before I shall relinquish my search for my child."

"But madam—I have money—I have saved nearly all my wages—you have been so kind to me, and I will not be any expense to you," Martha pleaded, anxiously.

Cecile was deeply touched by this proof of her love and fidelity.

"No, my good girl," she answered, "I must go alone, and you need not be anxious about me at all; traveling is made very easy and safe for ladies in this country; besides, if you should go with me, the business would have to stop, and I cannot afford that under any circumstances now; and then all those poor girls would be thrown out of employment," Cecile continued, thoughtful for others even in the midst of her own troubles.

"You know pretty well how I have managed," she went on, encouragingly, as she saw the girl's anxious look, "and you did so well during those few days when I was ill that I feel I can trust you fully. However, do your best, and keep the girls at work on the present patterns until you hear from me. I shall leave on the evening express; meanwhile I shall have much to do to get ready. While I arrange about my business, I shall leave you to put up what clothing I shall need for a few weeks, and pack a basket of luncheon for me—being alone, I shall not like to get out at the different stopping-places."

All Cecile's energy seemed to have returned to her now. She felt much stronger already for eating, and with her

mind fully determined upon her course of action, she was ready and eager to put her plans into execution.

Everything was very shortly arranged.

There was not a girl in her employ who did not sympathize with her deeply in her affliction, and all promised to be faithful during her absence, and give Martha no more trouble than they could help.

Just before starting, Cecile telegraphed to Dr. Mortimer that she was in deep trouble, that she would start that hour for San Francisco, go straight through, and asked him to meet her, if possible, when she arrived.

It was a long, tedious journey—almost interminable, it seemed to Cecile's tired, impatient spirit.

She grew thin and wan with constant inward chafing, while a sort of slow fever hung about her, eating away her strength and vitality with every passing day.

It was over, however, at last, and as the train steamed into the magnificent station at Oakland—the terminus of the Central Pacific Railroad—she looked eagerly forth from the car window, anxiously scanning every countenance.

Almost the first she saw, when the train stopped, was Dr. Mortimer's friendly face; for, faithful to his promise to "help her in any emergency," he had come to meet her here, well knowing that it would be very hard for her to look after her baggage and cross the bay to San Francisco alone, after her wearisome journey.

She had been brave and self-reliant all the way, but now the reaction had come—the strain upon her delicate organization had been more than she could well bear; her strength forsook her, and she sank back in her chair and gave way to a burst of nervous weeping.

Dr. Mortimer had seen that anxious face, those strained, troubled eyes at the window, and he immediately sprang upon the car and came to her. For one brief instant he held the hand she gave him without a word of greeting, then stepped behind her chair and stood quietly waiting there until she could recover in a measure her composure.

He saw how she was at once; she had come all that

long distance alone, driven by some great trouble to seek his aid; she was worn, anxious, nervous, and needed rest and quiet more than anything else just at present.

"Give me your checks, Mrs. Montgomery," he said, at length, bending forward and speaking in a low tone, "and I will go and attend to your baggage, then return for you."

She gave him her one check, for she had brought only a single small trunk; and he went out, while she thanked him in her inmost heart for his thoughfulness and delicacy in thus leaving her alone.

When he returned she was more like herself, and gave him both her hands in a burst of gratitude.

"This is very good of you, Dr. Mortimer. I fear I have put you to a great deal of trouble," she said, not able, even then, to control the quivering of her beautiful lips. "But," she added, trying to smile, "I have taken you at your word, and kept my promise to you. I am in sore need of a friend just now, and have turned to you as you bade me do."

"You have done perfectly right," he answered, heartily, "and in so doing you have conferred a great favor upon me by your confidence in me. But come, we will not remain longer here; I have engaged rooms for you in the same house where I have my home—I thought it would be much more pleasant and more homelike than for you to go to a hotel; and Mrs. Lawson, my landlady, is a kind, motherly woman, and will exert herself to make you comfortable."

Cecile was touched by this evidence of his consideration for her.

She had dreaded, more than she would have been willing to confess, going alone to a strange hotel, but had expected to be obliged to do so.

They repaired to the ferry and crossed the bay, which occupied some twenty minutes, and upon landing again the doctor led her to his own carriage, which was waiting to convey them to good Mrs. Lawson's boarding-house.

During their drive he would not allow her to tell him

anything, even though he was exceedingly anxious to know what dire necessity could have sent her flying thus to him.

"You must not talk until you have had food and rest," he said decidedly, when once she lifted her white face to him and seemed about to confide in him, and he immediately began a lively description of the city generally, and the streets through which they were passing, while with a sense of restfulness already stealing over her, she leaned back against the soft cushions and listened to him.

She found her rooms—a bedroom, with a charming little sitting-room connected—very pleasant and cozy, while Mrs. Lawson had an inviting meal all ready to serve to her as soon as she should replace her travel-stained garments with fresh ones.

"I have an appointment now," Dr. Mortimer said, just as she was about to sit down to the table. "I shall be absent for an hour, perhaps a little longer; meantime you must eat well and rest, and when I return you shall tell me all your trouble."

She could not speak as he took her hand at parting, the great sobs choked her so, but she was lighter of heart than she had been since the loss of Daisy, for she knew that this strong, brave man would do his utmost to help her, and somehow the sight of his noble, kindly face made her very hopeful.

And now how was it with blue-eyed, golden-haired Daisy? The beautiful little fairy sat upon the stool where her mother had placed her for some ten minutes, keeping up a brisk, imaginary conversation with her newly-acquired treasure—the doll.

While thus employed another carriage stopped before the store, and a lady in a traveling-dress alighted and entered.

"Is the package of goods that I ordered yesterday ready for me?" she asked, approaching the counter where Cecile had stood but a few minutes before.

It was Mrs. Langley, and she seemed to be in something of a hurry.

The obsequious clerk bowed as he answered:

"Yes, madam," and handed her what appeared to be a box neatly wrapped in white paper.

She paid him, and then while she was arranging the contents of her purse he was called further down the counter to wait upon other customers.

Mrs. Langley took up her parcel and was about turning to leave the store, being so intent upon her errand that she had not even noticed the child sitting so near her, when Daisy, proud of her new possession, held her up, saying brightly:

"*Dolly* is a weal beauty."

Those words, "real beauty," had seemed to cling to her ever since her meeting with her aunt in the Park, and she was continually using them, somewhat to the annoyance of Cecile, who was always unpleasantly reminded of her sister-in-law whenever she heard them.

Mrs. Langley glanced down upon the child and started. She knew her instantly, and her face flushed with pleasure at the meeting; it was her brother's little one, and her heart was strangely moved by her presence.

"So she is a real beauty, darling," she replied, bending down and hastily kissing the little flowerlike face; "but where is mamma?"

"Mamma way down there," Daisy answered, pointing with one tiny finger in the direction her mother had gone.

Mrs. Langley looked, but Cecile was not in sight—she was standing on the other side of a pillar at the further end of the store, having just completed her purchase, and was now waiting for her change.

There was no one near them—the clerks were all busy with other customers, and they were just at the entrance to the store, which stood upon a corner with doors opening on two streets.

A strange light had shot into Mrs. Langley's eyes as she noticed all this, and hastily quitting the child she went out to her carriage.

"John, I have a little more business to do, she said, hurriedly, to the driver; "you can drive on to the station and get my baggage checked, and I will take a car; that will save time, and I have none to lose."

John touched his hat, gathered up the reins, and drove on, while his mistress returned to the store, a desperate and diabolical purpose in her heart.

Everybody was busy, and Daisy sitting just where she had left her; while a quick, searching glance told her that Cecile was nowhere in sight.

"Come, dear; mamma wants you. I will take you to her," she said, in a low, coaxing tone, and holding out her hand to her.

Never doubting the truth of this assertion, the little one got down from her perch, put her hand confidingly into the one extended to her, and the two passed out of the *side entrance* to the store, thus coming out upon another street.

Walking as swiftly as she could for a little way with her small charge, Mrs. Langley turned another corner, hailed a car, and entered, a sigh of relief escaping her, as she thus felt reasonably sure of not being followed.

After riding a short distance, she changed cars, and was taken directly to the railway station.

Here she found the train on which she was to leave, waiting. Ten minutes was all the time that remained.

She already had her ticket, and entering a palace car, she placed Daisy on a chair, bade the porter have an eye to her for a few minutes, and then went in search of John, to get her checks.

She was nervous and trembling, and so excited that the coachman, who was also looking for her, wondered what had occurred to disturb her composure to such an extent. She was usually calm, imperious, and self-assured. She dismissed him as soon as she could, and then returned to Daisy.

"Where's my mamma?" the little one demanded, looking up into her face with wondering eyes and a grieved expression about her lips.

"Mamma will come by and by," she returned, sooth-

ingly, and then began to talk in a very interesting manner about Miss Dolly, to turn her attention.

A boy with fruit was passing, and she bought a quantity of oranges, bananas, and confectionery, and with these kept Daisy busily employed until the train was well under way, and the poor little darling was being borne, as fast as steam and wheels could carry her, away from the fond mother who was at that moment frantically searching for her, and bound over the plains for far California.

Helen Langley had accomplished a bold and dastardly deed; but she had gained her object—her brother's beautiful child was in her possession, and she meant to keep her.

"No one will ever suspect me; no one will ever dream that I have the child. I have managed this thing very cleverly," she thought to herself, as, after long and wearisome effort, she had beguiled Daisy to sleep, and sat holding her in her arms, with a sense of triumph at having thus successfully achieved her purpose.

But she was greatly mistaken.

A mother's love and intuition were more powerful and unerring agents to detect her cowardly act than she imagined.

She was yet to realize what Cecile had once told her, that "a Vavasour was a match for a Montgomery," in more senses than one.

CHAPTER XVI.

"WE WILL FIND HER."

WHEN Dr. Mortimer returned from his "appointment," he found Cecile looking much refreshed, although still very anxious and worn.

She had exchanged her traveling dress for a handsome black silk, which fitted her slight figure like a glove, and though she wore no colors, the mass of creamy lace which she had arranged about her throat gave her an air of elegance that was very striking.

She was passing fair in Dr. Mortimer's eyes—dangerously fair, as he afterward found.

He had never forgotten her during the years that had elapsed since he parted from her in New York. Her beautiful face, with its lovely, piteous eyes, had haunted him for many a long month after his return. It had become an ideal face to him, and no other had ever had power to attract him afterward.

He saw now, however, that she had greatly improved. She had developed wonderfully. She was a hundred-fold more charming now than she had ever been before.

He had been greatly disappointed because he had never heard from her. He was hurt that she did not write and tell him something about herself.

He forgot that he had said to her "*if* your husband returns, you will write and tell me, that I may rejoice with you," and she had given her promise in that way.

Many times he had been upon the point of writing to her, for the longing to know her better was strong within him; but as often he had thrown aside his pen, saying impatiently to himself:

"I am a fool—she would despise me if she knew

how weak I am. She told me she would call upon me if she ever needed me, but she does not; she probably does not think of me at all, except, perhaps, as a kind-hearted fellow who once did her a kindness, although she was grateful enough at the time, and said she should 'never forget' me. I am a dolt to let her haunt me thus. If her husband has ever returned she is happy, and I have no business to be thinking of her in this way;" but a sigh of loneliness escaped him, and a sense of something lost out of his life always pervaded him at such times, when he realized how nearly he had come to love that beautiful, desolate women whom he had befriended during their voyage across the Atlantic.

Nevertheless, when he had met her that day in the car, and looked into those fathomless blue eyes, he knew that Howard Montgomery had never returned, and that some other trouble had been added to fill up the measure of her grief.

"Was Daisy dead?" he aked himself, as he saw that she was alone.

But no; that would not be a trouble that would send her flying to the far West to seek aid from him.

A strange thrill shot through him. She was alone and in sorrow; she had come to him, and that was sufficient to make him her slave, and devote every energy to her service.

"You are feeling somewhat rested," he said, gently, as he took her hand again, when she arose to meet him on his return.

"Yes, I am much refreshed; and, Dr. Mortimer," with an earnest quiver in her tones, "it was very kind and thoughtful in you to arrange these comforts for me."

Cecile glanced around the cheerful, home-like apartment as she spoke.

The corners of the doctor's handsome mouth curved in a little smile of amusement as well as pleasure at her appreciation of his efforts. She did not know that he had given up his own rooms to her, and taken a small, poorly furnished one up another flight, for Mrs. Dawson's house was full, and in no other way could Cecile have been accommodated there.

"I arranged for you just as I would have done for my own sister, if I had one, and she had come to visit me," he said, simply.

The tears started to Cecile's eyes; it was infinitely comforting to her to have him speak thus to her. It would be grand, she thought, to have *such* a brother.

"I suppose you are wondering what has brought me to San Francisco in such haste to seek your assistance," she said, a slight flush rising to her cheek, "but, my friend, I am in sore distress—my child," a great sob swelling her chest, "my Daisy has been *stolen* from me."

"Daisy stolen from you!" he ejaculated in astonishment, while his great heart seemed to bound into his throat at this dreadful intelligence.

He had grown very fond of the lovely babe during that sad voyage, but he had been sure from the despair in her mother's eyes that day that she was dead, and much as he had longed to ask "when" and "how," he had shrunk with keenest pain from hearing the fatal words.

"Yes," Cecile returned, "nearly a fortnight ago she disappeared in the most mysterious manner, and I believe she has been brought to this city; so I have followed her as quickly as I could—I *must find her* or I shall die; and this, Dr. Mortimer, is what I want you to help me to do."

"Of course I shall help you," he said heartily, while he gazed pitifully into her sad eyes, "but you surprise me more than I can tell you. Stolen! Who could have done such a dastardly deed, and for what purpose?"

"My suspicions have fallen upon her aunt—my husband's sister, Mrs. Langley;" and then she told him the circumstances of Daisy's sudden disappearance—the thought that had come like an inspiration to her, her visit to Mrs. Langley's residence, and the discovery that she had left for California the very day her child was lost.

Dr. Mortimer's face was almost a blank as he listened.

"But I thought—excuse me—I believed——" he began, and then stopped in confusion.

Cecile smiled sadly.

"You believed I sought help and comfort from my husband's sister upon my return from Europe," she said, a vivid scarlet staining her cheeks, and understanding him at once. "So I did, but Mrs. Langley had been opposed to my marriage with her brother, and had threatened to be revenged upon me if ever the opportunity was offered her, and when I sought her, and told her my sad story, she refused me all aid—she would not give me a shelter, even, until I could decide what was best for me to do—she would not even *lend* me money enough to cancel my indebtedness to you, and mocked at my grief and trouble."

"Mrs. Montgomery—I am shocked—grieved beyond expression!" Dr. Mortimer exclaimed in dismay. "You had endured all this on that day that I left you, and you did not tell me!—you let me go away believing you were provided with every comfort, with kind friends to care for you and to give you the sympathy you so much needed—you were *overwhelmed* with sorrow, and you could not confide in me when there was *nothing* that I would not have done for you!" he concluded, reproachfully.

"No, I could not tell you," Cecil returned, lifting her golden head with a regal movement. "I was too proud to tell you—kind as you had been to me—that my husband's own and only sister had turned me into the street as she would have turned a beggar; that she refused me all aid—even the address of my husband's lawyer, so that I might procure the money I so much needed."

"But—but—you had money—you told me that it was perfectly convenient to refund what I loaned you—you——" Dr. Mortimer began; then fearing he might be betraying too much curiosity regarding her affairs, he stopped short and colored like a girl.

"Yes, I had money, my friend, and it *was* perfectly convenient for me to cancel my indebtedness to you; so please do not reproach me for a pride which I could not conquer. My husband had lavished numerous and costly gifts upon me during our trip abroad, and as I knew I

should never take a moment's comfort with them—could never wear them except for him, I disposed of many of them, and in that way supplied myself with funds sufficient for all my immediate needs, and I could not—I *would* not weakly lean upon *any* one."

He thought he had never seen any one more regally beautiful than Cecile was as she told him this; the dignity and pride with which she spoke showed him a strength and depth of character which he had not suspected she possessed.

"It was a very stormy interview that I had with my proud sister-in-law," she continued, her cheek glowing at the remembrance, "and after she had abused me beyond endurance she added insult to injury by offering to adopt my child—she had none of her own—and relieve me of that burden! Of course I indignantly refused this proposition—I would have fought poverty and want a desperate battle before I would have given up my darling—and then she mocked at my grief, declaring that my husband had not met with any accident, as I believed, but becoming weary of me, as she had previously prophesied he would do, had deserted me."

"What a monster—what a reproach to womanhood she is!" Dr. Mortimer exclaimed excitedly; then added: "But you have *not* had to battle with poverty, I trust; you found your husband's man of business, and had your way smoothed for you, I hope."

"No; I did not discover who he was until it was too late; he died, and Colonel Langley assumed the care of my husband's property, and I could get nothing from him. I could have established my rights by a lawsuit, I suppose, but I was too wretched to care to drag my troubles before the public, and so I made up my mind to *work* and be independent."

"Mrs. Montgomery, why did you not send to me? I could have helped you in your extremity—I would have been *so glad* to do so," Dr. Mortimer said, deeply grieved.

"Because," Cecile answered, straightening her form, a rich color in her cheeks, while her eyes gleamed with

something of the resolution and purpose that had animated her during the last three years, "because something rose up within me, making me determined to conquer in the struggle. Helen Langley had told me before my marriage—when she tried to dissuade me from wedding her brother—that I was a 'mere baby'—that I had no character, and was not fit to be her brother's wife—was not his equal either mentally or socially; and now she reproached me with it again, exulting over the ruin which she had prophesied. I felt that the time had come to test my character, and to *prove* the material of which I was made, and I resolved that she should never be able to say that I sat weakly down and allowed my adverse fate to crush me. I vowed I would rise above it—that I would make myself independent of her or the charity of *any one.* And I have; since that day I have supported myself, my child, and Martha; you remember good, kind Martha; a more faithful girl never breathed; and we three have formed a little household of ourselves until—Daisy was stolen," and the sentences, which had been so strong and brave until now, ended in a sob.

"Mrs. Montgomery, I am amazed at what you have told me! *how* have you managed to do all this?" Dr. Mortimer asked, his fine eyes expressing the wonder and admiration he experienced for the spirit and independence which she manifested.

Much as he had admired her during their voyage across the ocean, he had never dreamed that she possessed a force like this; he had deemed her a beautiful, cultivated woman—one who, all her life, had sat in the lap of luxury, and who must always be shielded and tenderly cared for, and never be permitted to battle with the sharp winds of adversity.

Here she sat before him now, the same and yet not the same; for the three years that had elapsed since their parting had served to develop in her a rare womanhood. She was far more dignified—more self-possessed, and her every movement, though now, as then, full of grace, told of a self-reliance, energy, and perseverance which would allow nothing to daunt her when once her resolution was taken.

"How have I done it?" Cecile said, repeating his words, while her voice dropped to a low, reverent tone. "First by casting all my care upon Him who careth for those whom He afflicts. It has been the hardest and yet the sweetest lesson that I have had to learn during all my life, but once learned, all other things have been comparatively easy. I took a contract of a gentleman in New York to furnish him with fancy articles made of laces. He was exceedingly kind, and exerted himself to help me in every possible way, and I believe we were mutually benefited by our business arrangement."

She then went more into the details, giving him a complete history of her career as a manufacturer and woman of business.

"It has not been smooth all the way along," she concluded, with a little sigh, but with a brave smile; "I have been obliged to work hard with both hands and brain, but I have achieved, in a measure at least, my purpose; I have not only made considerable money, and won for my small family every comfort, but I have grown better and stronger, both mentally and physically. I have *saved* money, too, and if I never receive a dollar of my husband's property, there is no reason, if my business continues to prosper in the future as it has in the past, why I shall not have a snug little fortune of my own by and by."

Dr. Mortimer reached out and clasped the hand that lay near him.

"Mrs. Montgomery," he said, with a thrill in his tones, "I am very proud of you—I honor you; you have shown yourself a strong, brave, wise, as well as a loving woman. If there were more like you in the world there would be fewer bad men, fewer miserable homes; for, in my opinion, the cause of much of the crime in our country proceeds from vain, weak-minded women, who will not work, but spend selfishly and extravagantly, until they drive their husbands and friends to desperation, and they resort to illegal means to gratify their foolish whims."

"I fear I do not deserve your praises," Cecile an-

swered, thoughtfully; "the force of circumstances has *driven* me to exertion, and doubtless I owe everything to that. But, oh! Dr. Mortimer," she cried, all the anguish and mother-love for her lost darling suddenly rolling over her heart like a great wave, to the exclusion of every other thought, "my life, my work for the last three years, will all have been a failure if I cannot find my child."

"I know," he answered, gravely; "and if, as you surmise, she is here in this city, we *will* find her;" and Cecile took courage from his confident tone and the ready sympathy which led him to identify himself with her interests.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MOTHER-INSTINCT.

"I DO not know but I may have come upon a useless chase," Cecile said afterward, when they were considering the matter of Daisy's disappearance; "I have not the slightest *proof* that Mrs. Langley has taken her —nothing save an impression, a presentiment has actuated my movements. It was a feeling—an intuition, as it were—which came over me in an instant, and which I have not been able to shake off. My losing Daisy on the very day and about the same time that she started for California is the only circumstance which points that way. I can only imagine that she came into the store on some errand where we were, saw her sitting by the counter where I had left her, and seized that opportunity to carry her away. If she had not been so extremely anxious to take her; if she had not begged so earnestly for me to give her to her, even offering me a 'handsome income' in exchange"—this with curling lips and flashing eyes—"perhaps I should not have attributed this kidnapping to her."

"What plan of action have you thought of?" asked Dr. Mortimer, thoughtfully.

He would not discourage her by telling her that he thought the foundation of her hope that Daisy was with Mrs. Langley in San Francisco was a very weak one. He, too, feared she had come upon a wild and what would prove to be a fruitless chase; but at all events he would do what he could to help her.

"I thought of searching all of the hotel-lists—at least all of the first-class hotels; Mrs. Langley would patronize only such—and, if I could find her name, trace her from

there. Failing in that, I will set some detective at work," Cecile answered.

"Yes that will be the best course to pursue," he returned, "and I will begin the search at once. I will myself visit what first-class hotels I have time for this very afternoon, and go over the list of names."

Cecile sighed; she began to realize that the task she had set herself bade fair to be a long one.

Meanwhile, what could she do to employ herself to make the time pass quickly?

She at length decided that she could not be ide; she must have work, or she would chafe and worry away what little strength remained to her.

The next day, closely veiled, she went out and bought a quantity of laces; returning to her rooms, she set about making some samples to send to Martha for the girls to copy in her manufactory.

The fourth day after her arrival, about ten in the morning, Dr. Mortimer knocked on her door. At her sweet, low-voiced "Come in," he entered, and, as Cecile arose to greet him, he thought, despite the sad, inquiring eyes and anxious quiver of her lips, he had never seen a fairer vision in all his life.

Her golden hair was coiled like a coronet about her shapely head, and shone smooth and glossy as satin.

She wore a trailing *robe de neglige* of spotless white, exquisitely trimmed with some filmy fairylike lace, while her only ornament was a cluster of fragrant geranium leaves fastened just beneath her faultlessly molded chin.

Dr Mortimer's eyes burned with an intense light as his glance fell upon them.

He had sent her a lovely bouquet the day before, and he was quite sure those leaves had been culled from it; but his heart would not have throbbed in the way it did if he could have known how tenderly Cecile's fair hands had separated them from the flowers, and pressed them to her quivering lips, as she murmured, brokenly:

"Oh, Howard, my dear love! you always loved these delicate, fragrant things, and their perfume seems to bring you nearer to me."

And so, with only her great, absorbing love for her husband welling up in her heart, she had pinned them upon her breast, little imagining the wild hope that would thrill another as he looked upon them.

Dr. Mortimer once, while talking with her about the past, had asked her how she now felt regarding her husband's absence, and lifting her hopeless eyes to his, she had answered:

"Dr. Mortimer, if Howard Montgomery were living and could come to me, I *know* he would do so; he would never forsake the woman whom he had wedded—no matter what faults he might have discovered in her afterward—as his sister tried to torture me into believing. No—he is dead—there is no other way by which to account for his absence. For a whole year—yes, more—I looked and hoped for his return; then the hope died."

"*Hope died.*"

The words, uttered with paling cheek and trembling tones that told how mighty had been the love she had given him, haunted him continually.

She believed herself a widow—this gloriously beautiful woman, with her strong, true spirit, and the dauntless courage that had led her to face the world and win for herself and child a place and a home; with her purity of purpose, her queenly presence, her culture and refinement, which would make her a leader and a power in any society where she chose to mingle.

What a companion she would be for any man! What a helpmeet in every sense of the word! Could she be won a second time?

Such thoughts flashed through his brain every time that he came into her presence. He began to dwell upon them; they cast a spell over him, which every passing day only served to increase.

To-day he went forward and took both her fair hands in his, while his fine face was all aglow, caused by the sight of her peerless beauty, and the tidings he had brought her.

"Mrs. Montgomery," he said, "I think—I trust that I have some news for you this morning."

She started, and a low cry of joy parted her red lips.

"*Good news?*" she asked in a faint voice.

"Yes——"

"Oh! tell me—tell me!" she interrupted, excitedly.

"Sit down and I will," he replied, gently, and leading her to a low rocker.

"I went to the Palace Hotel first," he continued, and searched the list of a week, but without success. Then I went to the Baldwin Hotel, which, although not so large, is fully as elegant, and there among the names of the guests I found that of Mrs. Colonel W. E. Langley and—child."

Cecile was so utterly still and white for a moment after this intelligence that he thought she was going to faint. He feared he had told her too suddenly. The next she startled him with her wonderful self-control.

She looked up at him, a triumphant light gleaming in her fathomless eyes.

"I *knew* the mother-instinct in my heart could not deceive me," she said—"I *knew* that Helen Langley had stolen my child. But *she* little knows *me* if she thought I would sit tamely down and submit to any such outrage as this. Does she suppose that she will be able to *keep* my Daisy? No power on earth can do that. Dr. Mortimer, you will take me to the Baldwin Hotel at once," she concluded, rising.

"My dear friend," he returned, with an accent of self-reproach, "I am afraid I have given you reason to hope for too much. Mrs. Langley is not at the hotel now—she only remained there one day."

Cecile sank back again, disheartened, at these words.

"Has she left the city?" she asked, tremblingly.

"I think not; the clerk said he did not know where she had gone, but thought she must be somewhere within the city limits, as some people called upon her the day following her arrival and she went away with them, taking her baggage with her. The little girl—yours, I am sure, from his description—was well, apparently, but cried a good deal."

Cecile bowed her proud head at this, and sobbed.

"Oh, Daisy, my darling, I know you want mamma!"

The tender mother-love would have its way for awhile.

Then she arose again, lifting her form erect, and turning to her companion, her cheeks scarlet, her eyes glowing like coals of fire, said:

"Dr. Mortimer, I know that your time is valuable—that others want you—need you, perhaps—but my need is *greater* just now; there are other physicians, but *I* have no other *friend.* Will you give me your time? will you help me search for my child until I find her? I shall never know one moment of rest until I hold her clasped in my arms once more."

And he, trembling with the emotion with which her words filled him, bent toward her and answered in low, intense tones:

"I will do *anything in the world* for you."

His face flushed and his lips parted, as if he were about to say something more—something earnest and passionate—as if some emotion was about to burst forth which he could not control.

But it was only for a moment.

With a deep-drawn breath he drew back, then continued, in a more quiet tone:

"If you only knew the name of the friends whom Mrs. Langley came to visit it would help us a great deal."

"I do not," Cecile returned, despondingly.

"Then we must haunt the opera and theater, and places of amusement, fashionable shops, drives, and promenades. I will accept invitations into society, which heretofore I have nearly always refused, and I think we must discover some clue to her place of residence before very long. Do not be discouraged; I am quite hopeful now," the physician returned. and after talking over their plans for awhile longer Cecile also became more cheerful.

That evening they attended the California Theater.

Dr. Mortimer succeeded in obtaining a private box, so that Cecile might have an opportunity to watch, un-

observed, for the appearance of Mrs. Langley, if she should be there.

But she was not there.

Cecile sat through the whole play, sweeping with a powerful glass tier after tier of seats, with their occupants, but without avail. The face she sought was nowhere to be seen.

For more than a week they kept up a constant round of dissipation, caring nothing, however, for the entertainment, but each with a strong glass, looking, looking until their eyes ached and grew nearly blind with the constant strain, for that dark, handsome face which they never saw.

During the day Dr. Mortimer and his fair but closely-vailed companion haunted the fashionable promenades and drives; visited all the first-class stores, which shopping-loving people crowd day after day; crossed and recrossed the bay many times, thinking, perchance, that Mrs. Langley's friends might possibly reside in one of the charming surburban cities; but always with the same result.

If Helen Langley and her stolen prize were in the city at all they either did not go out or they were so unfortunate as to miss them every time.

"It is a thankless task," Cecile said, as with a pale, tired face and something of the old despair in her tones, she returned faint and weary, at the end of a fortnight, from one of the theaters to which Dr. Mortimer had taken her, and he, nearly as worn and spent as she, could only echo her words in his heart, while the fear was each day growing stronger that they should not succeed in the object which they had undertaken.

"You are tired out; you must rest for a few days," he said, as he removed her shawl and hat, made her sit down, and then brought her a glass of wine to drink.

Every day she was growing poorer; every day the strain on her nerves was becoming more unbearable, and he began to fear that she would break down entirely.

It was after eleven o'clock when they had entered Mrs. Lawson's comfortable home that evening, and after striv-

ing for a while to cheer her fainting heart, the doctor bade her a reluctant "good-night," and left her alone.

As he opened the door leading from her parlor into the hall, there came a furious ring at the hall-bell.

"A call for me, I suppose," he muttered, with a weary breath.

The night was chill and gloomy, and it seemed as if he could not drag his tired frame out again at that late hour. But he was faithful to every call; his great, generous, sympathetic heart would not let him refuse to go to any one who needed him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"WILL SHE DIE?"

DR. MORTIMER went slowly down the stairs and answered that furious ring himself, for every servant was in bed.

He found a man standing there, who handed him a note.

Bidding the messenger enter, he stepped under the hall-lamp to read it.

It had evidently been very hastily penned, and ran thus:

"DR. MORTIMER:—Return at once with the messenger by whom I send this. Do not delay for anything. MRS. C. A. SCHERMAN."

"Where does Mrs. Scherman live?" he asked of the man who stood waiting.

"No.— Nob Hill, sir," he returned respectfully.

The doctor raised his eyebrows. Nob Hill was an aristocratic quarter of the city, with which, as it happened, he had never yet had much to do, although his practice was by no means a limited one, and he wondered how his fame had crept into that vicinity.

Nob Hill, however, was a long distance from the quiet though respectable street where he resided, and he knew it would probably be nearly morning before he would be able to return or get any sleep.

But he saw at once that the call was urgent, and his conscience would not allow him to disregard it.

"Did you come in a carriage?" he asked turning to the man.

"Yes, sir; and Mrs. Scherman said you were to re-

turn with me—not to wait for your own team to be sent for—and I've got the fastest horse in the stable," he replied.

"Very well. Wait one moment," Dr. Mortimer said, and went quickly to his room for his heavy overcoat and medicine-chest.

In less than five minutes they were flying through the nearly deserted streets at an almost break-neck speed.

Arriving at No.— Nob Hill, the doctor saw at once that his mission lay in a very wealthy family, for the house into which he was ushered was palatial in all its appointments.

He was shown directly upstairs into a large, luxurious room, where low moans told him that the sufferer lay.

As he entered, a tall, graceful woman, with raven hair and eyes, a clear, brunette complexion and delicate, aristocratic features, came forward to meet him.

Something like a shock of electricity thrilled him through and through as he encountered her splendid eyes.

"Mrs. Scherman, I presume," he said, bowing before her.

"No, sir; Mrs. Scherman has just stepped into another room for a moment. I am Mrs. Langley, and I have sent for you thus imperatively because I fear my little daughter is dangerously ill."

Dr. Mortimer knew now what had caused that sudden thrill. It was the presentiment or impression that he stood on the verge of a discovery.

Every nerve in his body had tingled when she had pronounced her name, and it was with difficulty that he could prevent a violent start and receive her information with any degree of calmness.

This, then, was Helen Langley, the cold-hearted, revengeful sister-in-law of Cecile Montgomery—the mocker of her troubles, the abductor of her child.

She was a queenly, splendid-looking woman, accustomed, evidently, to mingle in the highest social circles, and doubtless respected and admired by all who could

not look below the surface and know the treachery of her nature; and, as the noble physician gazed upon her he could hardly believe it possible that any one so beautiful could be capable of so much evil.

"Mamma, mamma!" moaned a hoarse little voice from behind the curtains of the bed.

"Yes, darling," Mrs. Langley murmured tenderly, and instantly went over to her.

The child uttered a fretful cry as she parted the drapery and bent down to her, speaking fond, soothing words; then again came that plaintive wail:

"Mamma, mamma!"

Dr. Mortimer, with a very pale face and stern, set lips, removed his heavy coat, warmed his hands before the fire, which was burning brightly in the polished grate, and then went and stood beside the woman who was bending with such an anxious face over the little sufferer.

One glance was sufficient to tell him that the child was Daisy, for her mother had brought with her beautiful pictures of her darling; and even though the little face was now crimson and contracted with pain, the throat badly swollen, he recognized her at once; also the deep-blue eyes so like Cecile's own, and the rich golden hair.

His practiced eye told him instantly that she was indeed "dangerously ill."

The little pulse was leaping from the effects of fever, her breathing labored, and her throat in a fearful state.

Mrs. Langley, watching him closely as he made his examinations, saw the grave look settle over his face and the anxious expression in his eyes.

"What is it, doctor—what is the matter with her?"

"Diphtheria," he answered, briefly.

"Diphtheria!" exclaimed the now thoroughly alarmed woman, growing pale and shivering with fear.

"Yes, madam, and only the very best of care, the closest attention, will save her. I should have been called three days ago," he answered, sternly.

Mrs. Langley sank weakly into a chair.

"What shall I do?" she cried, wringing her slender,

jeweled hands. "I know nothing about sickness; I shall not know how to take care of her."

"Has your child never been ill before?" he asked, shooting a keen glance at her.

"No—yes—that is, she has never had any very serious illness," she answered, with confusion, the color leaping brightly into her face.

"Mamma, come—come to Daisy!" cried the little one, sobbingly.

"Does she fret much like this?" Dr. Mortimer asked, bending over his small patient to hide the moisture in his eyes caused by that pleading from the little longing, aching heart, and wondering how he could ever break the intelligence of her child's danger to Cecile.

As he spoke he laid his cool hand upon the fevered forehead, passing it gently back and forth, and for a few moments she lay more quiet beneath his touch.

"Yes," Mrs. Langley admitted, reluctantly, the red growing more vivid in her face, "she has fretted a good deal ever since we left home nearly four weeks ago. My place of residence is New York, and we have come to California to spend a few months with some friends. I am afraid, though, that Daisy has been homesick."

"There is no doubt about it," the physician said, confidently.

How well he knew that the little heart was yearning and hungering for home and home faces.

"How long has she been ailing?" he continued, after a moment of silence.

"For several days; but I thought she had only taken a slight cold, from which she would soon recover, and I was not alarmed until her throat began to swell so rapidly a few hours ago, and she was troubled to breathe."

"She ought to have been under treatment three days ago," the doctor again affirmed, with a very grave face.

"Will she die?" Helen Langley asked, catching her breath quickly.

"I—*hope* not," he replied, evasively.

"How long before you can tell? How long will she be ill?" she demanded, nervously, and beginning to wish

Daisy was safely back in New York in her mother's care.

"That will depend altogether upon what kind of care she receives. She is very sick, but there is a chance for her, though even with the best of care it will be some time before her recovery will be complete. If she *does not* have good care the case will terminate fatally, probably, in a couple of days."

Mrs. Langley regarded him curiously.

It was rather strange, she thought, that he should have so much to say about "good care."

"Of course she must, and will, have the best of care," she said, with dignity. "But I must confess that I feel incompetent to do for her what ought to be done, and I shrink from the responsibility"—he did not wonder that she did under the circumstances—"and I must have a nurse. Perhaps you know of an efficient one whom you can recommend, doctor?" she concluded, regarding him with anxiety.

This was just what he wanted—just what he had been working for.

Daisy now began to moan and toss again.

He turned to a table and mixed something in a spoon, then dropped it between her lips.

It was painful to see her try to swallow, her little throat was so full and so very sore; but she grew quiet again, after awhile, and then Dr. Mortimer turned once more to Mrs. Langley.

She had been watching his every movement with the closest attention, and studying his grave, handsome face.

She felt very uncomfortable in his presence; whenever he turned his keen glance upon her she involuntarily shrank from him, yet at the same time she experienced the most implicit confidence in his skill. There was something self-assuring about him.

"Yes, madam," he said; "I think I know some one who is just fitted to take charge of this case."

"Some one who will not be afraid of the disease?" she asked.

"Are *you* afraid of it, madam?" he demanded, turning to look her squarely in the face.

"I must confess that I am somewhat," she admitted, dropping her eyes beneath the quiet scorn in his glance. "But of course," she added, "I should not neglect Daisy for one moment on that account."

"Of course not," he repeated, dryly. "Mothers never stop to consider themselves when their children are in danger."

Mrs. Langley colored angrily.

What did this man mean by looking at her in such a strange way—by his quiet sarcasm, and the repetition of her words, as if they had a double meaning?

She never dreamed that he could know anything about her; and yet, somehow, it seemed to her guilty conscience as if he suspected her dark secret.

Had she known that this was the friend who had been so kind to Cecile in her trouble, she might have thought that he had been told of her; but Cecile had not mentioned his name when speaking of him—she had merely said a gentleman had assisted her, and, of course, she mistrusted nothing.

"No," she answered, haughtily, "mothers do *not* consider themselves when their little ones are suffering. But—but I think it would be well for you to engage this person of whom you have spoken, to assist me in the care of the child."

"I will do so with pleasure, madam, if such is your command," Dr. Mortimer returned, politely, but with a feeling of exultation in his heart that everything was working so well for that anxious mother, whom he had left so nearly discouraged but a little while before.

At least he hoped everything would work well; Daisy was very, very sick; but if it was in the power of medicine or his skill to prevent it, she should not die.

"I shall trust entirely to your judgment in this matter, Dr. Mortimer," Mrs. Langley returned. "I must have some one, and being a stranger here, it would not be easy for me to choose a suitable nurse for the child; while you, of course, *know* whom you recommend."

"Yes, madam," he replied, meeting her glance gravely, "I tell you candidly and honestly, I know of

no other so well fitted to take charge of this case as the woman of whom I have told you."

"Then bring or send her by all means," Helen Langley said, with a sigh of relief. "Will she be at liberty —do you suppose she will be willing to come early in the morning?"

"I think so—indeed, I have no doubt she will come as early as I wish."

"That is a comfort," heartily ejaculated the unsuspecting woman, who was wholly unconscious of the fine little plot that the worthy physician was concocting against her.

He had resolved the moment he had recognized Daisy to manage, in some way, to bring Cecile there to nurse her child. He knew that if he could once get her inside the house, and admitted to that sick chamber, the rest would be comparatively easy.

There would doubtless be a scene; he expected it; but he cared very little what Mrs. Langley or her friends might say or do so that the stolen child was restored to its mother.

It would be one of the best medicines the little one could have to wake up and find herself lying in that fond embrace; while one of the worst features of her illness just now, aside from the dreadful membrane which he knew was forming in her throat, was that constant fretting and moaning for the sight of that beautiful and loving face which was a part of her very life.

Dr. Mortimer gave very minute directions regarding the treatment of his patient until he should come again. She was still in an uneasy slumber, caused by the drops he had administered, but it seemed as if her fever burned fiercer and hotter with every passing moment.

"She must be watched constantly, and her medicines faithfully administered, or I will not answer for the consequences," he said, with an anxious parting glance at the little sleeper as he turned to go.

He dreaded to go, lest there should be some neglect, and Cecile should, after all, lose the dear one so nearly found; but he must go and break the news to her, and prepare her for the task before her.

"Everything shall be done according to your directions, you may rest assured," Mrs. Langley promised. "Mrs. Scherman will share my watch during the remainder of the night, and as she has had considerable experience in sickness, I think you may safely trust us."

There was a suspicion of sarcasm in those last words, for Mrs. Langley was very much nettled that he should treat her in what she considered such a childish manner.

"One would suppose from his manner that he thought I did not know anything, or that I had no love for the child, by the way he charged me about the medicines and the care of her. Of course he cannot know that Daisy does not belong to me, but I must say he acted very queerly," she mused, as she went back to her post by the bed and resumed her weary watching, not once suspecting that the waning hours were bringing her to disgraceful exposure and retribution.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TERRIBLE ORDEAL.

DR. MORTIMER reached his boarding-place, after his visit to Daisy Montgomery, a little after two in the morning.

He paused, as he was softly passing Cecile's door on his way to his room, and listened, a tender smile curving his fine lips and illuminating his eyes.

There was no sound within; Cecile, exhausted with her ceaseless efforts, was sleeping deeply and dreamlessly.

"My darling, I will not wake you, even though I long to see those sad eyes once more lighted with hope; you will need all the rest you can get, and my good news will keep until morning," he murmured, and then went on to seek the rest which he also so much needed.

Cecile did not make her appearance until nearly eight o'clock the next morning.

She had wept herself to sleep, and had slumbered so heavily in consequence that she did not wake as early as usual.

Dr. Mortimer came in while she sat at breakfast; and good Mrs. Lawson, who had nearly exhausted her knowledge of culinary matters in trying to coax back her guest's failing appetite, complained that she was not eating enough to keep a mouse alive.

The doctor sat down to the table with her, and began talking in a cheerful off-hand manner, while every now and then he would reach over and deposit a choice bit upon her plate, asking her to "just taste" of it. Thus he managed to get her to eat quite a respectable breakfast.

He followed her into the parlor after the meal was over, and, shutting the door behind him, went up to

her and took both her hands in his, while he looked down into her eyes with a light in his that made her tremble.

"Cecile," he said, unconsciously using that name for the first time in his excitement, "can you bear some news this morning?"

"What?" she breathed, her whole being electrified at once, while involuntarily her fingers twined themselves about his hands in a clinging, eager clasp.

The clasp, the look, were almost more than he could bear, strong man though he was, for every day in her presence was serving to show him that his life was becoming centered in her—that he loved her with a devotion that would either make or mar his whole life.

She did not seem like the same person who had sat so wearily at the breakfast-table ten minutes before.

Her fair face was all aglow with hope, and looked into his with such trustful expectation; her pure breath fanned his cheek and her wondrous eyes were lifted so eagerly, her red lips just parted with that eager query.

How beautiful she was! Oh! if he could but *keep* that glad light always in her eyes.

"Good tidings," he answered.

"You have found her—my Daisy!" she cried, in glad, triumphant tones.

"Yes—but—" he began, when, with an exquisitely graceful movement, she interrupted him by bending down and touching his hands gratefully with her lips, while great glittering tears gathered on her golden lashes and rolled over her flushed cheeks.

"Ah, what a friend you have been—what a friend you *are* to me!" she said, brokenly. "Where *is* my darling? Tell me and let me go to her at once; my heart is so hungry for her—my empty arms ache to enfold her."

She was trembling with excitement and eagerness, and he almost feared to tell her how sick her little one was, lest it should unnerve her completely.

"You must be calm—you will need all your strength for what is before you," he said. "I have something

unpleasant to mingle with my good news. Daisy is found, but—she is very sick."

With a terrified cry she drew her hands from his, clasping them in sudden pain.

"Has she *dared* to neglect my child, after having stolen her from me?" she cried, passionately. "Is she so very ill—dangerously so?"

"Yes, she is dangerously ill, but I do not consider her case a hopeless one now, since you will go to her and care for her," Dr. Mortimer said, thinking it best to tell her the worst at once.

Her face grew suddenly white as chiseled marble, and stern like a Nemesis.

"If my child dies, let Helen Langley beware of a despairing and outraged mother's vengeance!" she said, in cold, relentless tones.

Dr. Mortimer made her sit down; she was shaking as with the ague, and he realized, as he had not done before, how the anxiety of the last few weeks had worn upon her; she betrayed it in this nervous excitability which was not natural to her.

"This will not do!" he said, decidedly. "You are unfitting yourself for what is before you, and unless you can calm yourself I shall not dare to take you to Daisy. You are her mother, and better calculated to take care of her than any one else; but you would do her more harm than good in your present state; and she needs you sadly; she calls for 'mamma, mamma,' almost constantly."

She looked up at him beseechingly for a moment, then she turned away, and hid her face upon the arm of the sofa, and wept violently.

The picture of her child, ill, suffering, among entire strangers, calling for her continually, missing the tender care and love from which she had been so cruelly torn, rent her heart in twain, and made her sob like a child.

She knew how she had suffered herself, and if Daisy had endured one-half as much, it was no wonder that she was sick.

It was the first time that she had ever given way to

her feelings like this before Dr. Mortimer; she had been brave and strong outwardly, only her pale face and hopeless eyes telling him day by day what she was suffering in her mind.

He thought it best to let her tears have their course, and sat perfectly still by her side until her weeping ceased.

We know that Cecile Montgomery was anything but a weak woman; but exhausted humanity, like richly-laden grain, will sometimes bend beneath the fierce storms which sweep over it, and even rise refreshed and strengthened afterward.

"There!" she said, at length, sitting up, and wiping the tears from her flushed cheeks, while she tried to smile at her own weakness; "I believe the atmosphere will be clearer for this shower. The clouds which overshadowed me were so heavy that they *had* to burst. Now, Dr. Mortimer, I am ready for anything; I will betray no more folly like this, and you are very kind to bear with me so patiently. Tell me about Daisy as quickly as you can, and then take me to her; you know I cannot wait long now."

In as few words as possible he told her of his midnight call and visit to Nob Hill, his instant recognition of Daisy, his interview with Mrs. Langley, and his proposition to supply a nurse for the child.

"I am going to take you directly there this morning," he said in conclusion; "and once inside that house, you will have no difficulty in claiming your little one, and asserting your right to care for her."

"That was a very clever thought," Cecile answered. "But, oh, Dr. Mortimer, is she really so very ill? Can't you save her for me?"

"I must tell you the truth," he replied soberly. "She is very dangerously ill; but if we can pacify her—if she should recognize you and stop grieving for you, it will be a great point gained."

"My poor darling! how she must have missed her mother!" Cecile murmered, with quivering lips. "What is her disease?"

Dr. Mortimer, had been dreading this question, but he answered briefly:

"Diphtheria."

"Diphtheria!" she repeated, aghast, and with blanching cheeks, even as Mrs. Langley had done; but there was no thought of self in her fear.

"Are you afraid of it?" he asked, to test her, as he had done that other woman a few hours before.

"Afraid of it!" she repeated. "Not for myself, but for her. Oh! I should have more hope of rescuing her from the jaws of some ferocious animal than from that dread disease."

For a moment it seemed as if she must yield beneath this crushing blow; but the next she arose calm and strong, though with the face of a statue.

"Dr. Mortimer, I will be ready to go with you in ten minutes," she said, and left the room without another word.

She was back again in less than that time, equipped for her ride, and carrying a satchel in her hand containing a few necessary articles, and some of Daisy's clothing. Her belief that she should find her had been so strong that she had directed Martha to pack several changes.

She could not talk much during her drive, for her heart was too heavy and anxious, and a deep-drawn sigh of relief escaped her when at length the carriage stopped before that elegant mansion on Nob Hill.

Before alighting she drew her vail close about her face, to conceal, if possible, her features, and prevent Helen Langley from recognizing her, at least until she could get to Daisy; then she would not care for an army of women like her.

They were led directly to the sick-room, where they were courteously received by Mrs. Scherman, a lovely, gentle-appearing woman, who told them she feared that the child was worse, as her breathing was more labored, and her little throat so filled up that it was almost impossible for her to swallow.

She glanced with surprise at Dr. Mortimer's stately

companion, with her pale but calm and beautiful face.

"She does not look like a nurse," she thought, glancing at her white, delicate hands; but Dr. Mortimer's next words set her at rest upon that point, at least for the time.

"This is the nurse of whom I spoke to Mrs. Langley last night," he said, purposely avoiding an introduction just then.

"I am glad she has come," Mrs. Scherman returned, with a look of relief, as she bowed to Cecile; then she added:

"Mrs. Langley went to lie down an hour ago, and if you do not mind I will not call her just yet. She was quite worn out with watching and anxiety."

She might truthfully have added that she also was worn out, for she had shared all Mrs. Langley's watch, and had assumed nearly the whole care of Daisy, seeing how inefficient and frightened her friend was.

"I do not mind," Cecile said, with shaking lips, and an agonized glance toward the bed, as with trembling fingers she quickly removed her cloak and hat.

Then, with swift but noiseless steps, she glided to the side of Dr. Mortimer, who, with a troubled, anxious face, was bending over her child, his fingers on her pulse, his eyes on her crimson face.

"You *will* not let her *die*," Cecile whispered, almost fiercely, while it seemed as if her tortured heart would burst to see her darling lying there in that dreadful state.

She saw at once that she was fearfully ill, but she dare make no sign of her own misery lest she should disturb the sufferer, lose her self-control, and become unfitted for the duties which lay before her.

Dr. Mortimer gave her a sympathizing look, and yet he could not conscientiously speak one word of hope, for he knew by Daisy's breathing that it was doubtful if that fatal membrane would ever yield to the power of medicines; if it would not, she *must* die.

While they stood there together, Mrs. Scherman watch-

ing the beautiful nurse with a sort of fascination—she thought for an entire stranger she was conducting herself very queerly—Daisy began to arouse from the sleep, or half stupor into which she had fallen.

The little parched lips framed the words "mamma, mamma," but the condition of her throat would permit no intelligible sound to issue from them.

Cecile's heart stood still in this supreme moment, the agony in her face so intense that Dr. Mortimer had to turn away from the sight of it lest his own self-control should forsake him.

The child's eyes fell upon the physician first, then slowly turned and rested upon the figure standing so motionless by his side.

A look of startled wonder came into them for a moment, while Cecile held her breath, fearing the result, yet praying in a sort of internal frenzy for one look of recognition from her dying darling.

The next instant a wild, piercing scream rang through the apartment, the little white-robed figure sprang into the air, and Daisy was clasped in her mother's arms, sobbing and clinging to her with all the strength that remained in her frail body.

Dr. Mortimer looked greatly alarmed at this unexpected proceeding, while Cecile, though she folded her darling close to her breast in a loving embrace, murmuring low, fond, soothing words in her ear, striving to calm this sudden and terrible excitement, was herself so weak and trembling that it required the greatest effort to keep from sinking to the floor.

Mrs. Scherman came quickly forward to inquire the meaning of the strange scene; but there was no time for explanations then, for confusion reigned during the next few minutes, and intensest anxiety for that precious little life filled every heart.

Daisy's sobbing was suddenly turned to choking and strangling, until she grew fairly black in the face, and they thought she would die then and there. This was followed by violent nausea, frightening both Mrs. Scherman and Cecile almost beyond power of action; but the

terrible ordeal was over at last, and as Dr. Mortimer set back upon the table the bowl which he had held he murmured a low, reverent "Thank God!"

The dreadful membrane, which he had been so sure would cause death in a very short time, was there—that scream, that spring, the choking and nausea all combined, had expelled it; it could obstruct her breathing no more, its poisonous properties could no longer be absorbed into her system, and though he knew she was not out of danger, by any means, yet there was very much more of hope for her than there had been.

"Mamma—mamma," contentedly murmured the little one, as half an hour later she lay weak, exhausted, but quiet, and breathing easily, in Cecile's arms, an almost ecstatic look fixed upon her face.

Cecile's smile was heavenly, her deep, blue eyes almost holy in their expression of answering love.

She began to rock back and forth in the low chair in which she was sitting, and to sing some soft, familiar lullaby, and soon those golden-fringed lids, which she was watching, began to droop, the bright head lay still upon her bosom, the little limbs relaxed, and Daisy slept quietly, peacefully, restfully.

CHAPTER XX.

SWEET AND COMFORTING WORDS.

"WHAT does all this mean?" Mrs. Scherman asked of Dr. Mortimer, whom she drew one side when she saw that his patient was resting and did not need him.

She had been impressed the instant she saw Cecile that something was wrong, or very strange about her presence there.

She was convinced, after the first glance, that that beautiful, refined-looking woman was no ordinary nurse, while, too, something in her features struck her as being familiar, although at that moment she did not connect that circumstance with Daisy.

She had wondered at the young mother's white, set face; she had remarked her trembling hands as she removed her hat and cloak, and had seen the emotion which she could not entirely control, as she bent over her sleeping child.

Surely, no nurse that she had ever seen had exhibited such an intense interest in her patient as this!

Daisy's spring and scream had frightened her nearly to death, although she had not a suspicion of its cause.

All through the latter part of the night she had been growing visibly worse, and she was continually fearing that she would choke and die, and she believed the final struggle had really come, when she heard that startling cry.

But, although the whole scene had been painful in the extreme to those who were so anxiously watching her, it proved to be the salvation of the little one.

That sudden scream and spring had dislodged the membrane which had formed in her throat—the strang-

ling and vomiting had expelled it, and when she at length grew easy and dropped asleep, they felt assured that the worst was over.

Cecile's looks of love and anxiety, and the child's contented cooing—instead of that plaintive wail—"mamma, mamma," were puzzles which Mrs. Scherman could not solve, hence her question to Dr. Mortimer.

"It means, madam," he said, a stern look settling over his fine face, "that there has been a great wrong done. That child yonder does not belong to Mrs. Langley, as you have been led to believe; she was *stolen* a few weeks ago from the woman who holds her now, and who, nearly distracted, has been seeking for her ever since the dastardly deed was committed."

Mrs. Scherman looked startled—shocked at the information.

"There must be some mistake—you must have been misinformed," she said, regarding him with perplexity.

"Can you look upon that fair woman's face and doubt the truth of what I have told you?" Dr. Mortimer demanded, and pointing to Cecile who sat watching her sleeping child with such an expression of absorbing love that the tears involuntarily sprang to the lady's eyes.

"But I do not understand," she answered, unable even yet to comprehend. "Who stole her?"

"The woman who calls herself your friend—Mrs. Langley."

"It cannot be possible—I will not believe any such thing of her," she indignantly returned.

Dr. Mortimer bowed politely, although his face flushe at having his truthfulness thus assailed.

Mrs. Scherman was every inch a lady, and she instantly saw that she had been guilty of rudeness.

"I beg your pardon," she said quickly, and also flushing. "I should not have spoken so decidedly, but I am deeply hurt to have my friend charged with anything so horrible. I knew that the child was not her own, but one whom she had adopted."

"Yes, but *forcibly* adopted," briefly replied her companion.

"Would you please explain yourself, Dr. Mortimer?" Mrs. Scherman said with great dignity, while she deeply regretted at that moment having sent for him the night previous.

Her own physician was absent on a trip East, but she had asked him before he left whom she should employ in case a member of her family should be taken seriously ill while he was away. He had recommended Dr. Mortimer, giving her his address, and speaking in the highest terms of his skill and judgment, and thus it had happened that he had been summoned to attend the very child whom he was searching for.

"Certainly, madam," he answered, with equal stiffness, something of the bitterness which he experienced for Helen Langley extending to her friend; and then in a few rapidly-spoken sentences he told her the story of Cecile's life.

He told her of Mrs. Langley's opposition to the marriage, her abuse both before and after that event, her threat to be revenged, her refusal to aid her at the time of her return from abroad under such trying circumstances, how she had faced and conquered her fate, and finally of Mrs. Langley's offer to adopt her child, upon the refusal of which she had kidnapped her.

It was an exciting, romantic story, almost too wild for her to credit. Mrs. Scherman and Mrs. Langley had been intimate friends for years, and she may be forgiven the somewhat suspicious glance which she shot at Cecile upon its conclusion.

"It seems incredible," she said, coldly. "Of course this is Mrs. Montgomery's version of the story, and therefore I feel obliged to reserve my verdict until I can learn Mrs. Langley's defense."

"You are perfectly right in so doing," Dr. Mortimer answered, with great politeness. "But what I have told you, madam, is not wholly Mrs. Montgomery's version, as you suppose, for I returned on the same steamer from Europe with her. I knew of her great trouble then, and assisted her by every way in my power, and I can take my oath that the child your friend claims to have 'adopted' is her very own."

He took, as he ceased speaking, a photograph from his pocket, and handed it to her.

It was a picture of Daisy, taken only a few months before, which Cecile had brought with her, and which he had carried with him ever since, hoping by it to identify the child.

"Where did you get this?" Mrs. Scherman asked in great surprise, recognizing it instantly.

"Her mother brought it to assist in the search for her."

"How long has she been in San Francisco?" Mrs. Scherman asked, glancing over at the young mother, and now understanding why her features had been familiar to her, for the child resembled her.

"A fortnight and a day or two. She learned that Mrs. Langely left for California the very day that her child disappeared, and became possessed with the idea that *she* had taken her. She telegraphed to me the day she left, claiming the fulfillment of the promise I had previously made her to help her at any time and under any circumstances. I met her when she arrived, but felt as if she had come upon a fruitless errand when she told me the object of her journey; but day and night ever since we have searched untiringly, seeking to discover Mrs. Langley's whereabouts, and to me it seems like the intervention of Providence that I should have been summoned here last night.

"I recognized the child instantly," Dr. Mortimer went on, after a moment's thought, determined to reveal everything, "and my indignation against that heartless woman nearly made me betray my interest in her. She wanted a nurse, and it flashed upon me that it was just the opportunity which Mrs. Montgomery needed to improve; consequently I brought her here this morning. These, madam, are the main facts in the case, and when you have learned your friend's version, you will, of course, be governed by your own conviction regarding the matter. But whatever they may be, I shall feel it my duty to protect Mrs. Montgomery from further annoyance and abuse on the part of Mrs. Langley, and

see that her rights as the parent of that child are maintained." And not caring to prolong the conversation any further, he made his bow and went quietly to Cecile's side.

"She looked at him with a grateful smile.

"She is better. She how quietly she is sleeping," she whispered, while she toyed, with a loving hand, with a glossy ringlet that lay on her arm.

"Yes, I believe she is really better," he answered, thinking how like the face of an angel hers was, lighted with that wondrous mother-love.

At this moment Mrs. Langley entered, with much rustling of silken robes and stiffly-starched skirts.

He turned to speak to her, while Cecile quietly arose, laid Daisy gently down upon the bed, covering her lightly with the soft blanket, then faced about to confront her enemy, bracing herself for the encounter, which her heart told her would be a severe one.

Helen was asking Dr. Montgomery how he found his patient, and if he had succeeded in securing a nurse.

Cecile was standing directly behind him, and his large, tall form hid her completely from Mrs. Langley's observation, while Mrs. Scherman, from her position at one side of the room, was watching the trio with no ordinary interest.

"My patient, I think, is better this morning," Dr. Mortimer said, "and, Mrs. Langley," he added, stepping a little to one side, "this is the nurse whom I have brought to take care of her."

The two women, both so strikingly beautiful, yet so unlike, stood confronting each other, and neither spoke for the space of a full minute.

Mrs. Langley grew deadly white with anger, astonishment and chagrin; then all the passion of her fiery nature blazed forth, while she wondered how on earth Cecile had ever traced her there.

"*You!*" she cried fiercely, and lifting her clenched hand as if she would have struck her, while Cecile stood calm and unruffled before her, awaiting the course of events.

She was mistress of the field now, and she cared for no one.

"There is no one so well calculated to nurse a child as its own mother," she said quietly, but she looked like some fair young queen as she spoke.

"What do you mean?" the enraged woman cried, determined to face her down, if possible. "Dr. Mortimer," turning to him with flashing eyes, "I will not have this person to nurse my child. I object to her—you can take her away at once."

"But, madam, you told me you should rely wholly upon my judgment, and I have brought Mrs. Montgomery to nurse Daisy Montgomery, and *she will remain*," he concluded, with decision.

"She shall not—*will* you go?" Helen demanded, going nearer to Cecile, while she trembled violently.

"No, I shall not go, and you cannot come any nearer my child. Stand back, Mrs. Langley."

There was no mistaking the meaning of these words, low as they were spoken, and involuntarily Helen Langley recoiled from the fire that was blazing at her from those wonderful blue eyes.

Mrs. Scherman now came forward.

"Helen," she said gravely, "what is this that I hear? Dr. Mortimer has been telling me a strange story. He says this lady is Mrs. Montgomery, your brother's wife—that Daisy is *her* child, and that you *stole* her from her after she had refused to allow you to adopt her. Now, tell me the truth of the matter, if you please."

"Pshaw! Fanny. I do not doubt they have been filling your ears with some miserable story about me," Mrs. Langley tried to say indifferently. "It is true that my brother married that woman, and found, all too late, what an irreparable mistake he had made. After they had been abroad a year, for some reason best known to himself, he left her, and she returned to this country with her child. I insisted upon adopting her, as the person best fitted to bring her up, and that is how I came to take her. Just think what a life she would lead reared in poverty, and by a woman whom her husband had deserted."

"I thought you said your brother was dead, Helen," Mrs. Scherman said, regarding her with a strange look.

"And so I believe he is now, for we have made every effort to find him; but two hours before *she* sailed," pointing to Cecile, "he was alive and well, as she will tell you herself."

"*When* did you adopt the child?" Mrs. Scherman asked.

"A little while before coming here," Mrs. Langley returned evasively, but with a guilty flush, while Cecile's beautiful lips curled with scorn at the quibble.

"*How* did you take her, Helen—did her mother give her to you willingly?"

Mrs. Langley turned upon her friend with assumed indignation at this query.

"I did not suppose I had come before a tribunal when I came in here just now," she said, angrily; "but, Fanny, one thing is certain: she," indicating Cecile with a motion of her head, "cannot remain here to nurse Daisy. I object to it decidedly. I will not stay in the same house with her a single hour."

Cecile now advanced a step or two, for Mrs. Langley during the last few moments had been edging toward the door, as if anxious to make her escape from this unpleasant inquisition—and stood facing her, her slender form drawn to its fullest height.

She spoke very low for fear of disturbing Daisy, but her words were clear and decisive.

"Mrs. Langley," she said, "it is immaterial to me whether you remain in the house with me or not; but no power on earth shall separate me from my child again, now that I have found her; she *is* mine, and you know it, by every law, both human and divine; and if you persist in claiming her and keeping her from me, I will at once have you arrested for your crime and put where you can do me no further injury. It will be best for you to let me alone after this; I tell you frankly that I am a desperate woman this morning, for the life of my child is at stake, and I have borne all that I ever shall from you.

"You call yourself a respectable woman," she went on, with stinging sarcasm; "you claim to occupy a position among the highest people of our country, you boast of the nobility of your race and name, your *'aristocratic birth;'* and yet you would stoop to rob a woman of her only treasure, her only comfort; you *kidnapped* a little child, tore it almost from its mother's arms, regardless of her sufferings in being thus deprived of the tender care to which she had always been accustomed, and of the misery you were leaving behind; I wonder that her grieving, her moaning and pleading for me, did not drive you wild."

(And it had, if she could but have known it; many a night had been made horrible to her, for Daisy not only sobbed herself to sleep, but kept it up in her dreams, often starting up with a wild scream and calling piteously for the mother whom she loved so well.)

"Dr. Mortimer," Cecile demanded, suddenly turning to him, as if a new thought had occurred to her, "would it be possible—would it do, under *any* circumstances, to remove Daisy from here to-day?"

"No," he said, decidedly, "it could not be thought of for a moment; if she should continue to improve, it might do to move her a couple of days hence, by exercising great care."

Cecile sighed; then she turned to Mrs. Scherman with an appealing gesture, and a world of pathos in both face and voice.

"Mrs. Scherman," she said, "you are a mother, for I heard childish voices as I came up the stairs—must I plead in vain to be allowed to remain in your house for a few days to take care of my child?"

"Most certainly not, Mrs. Montgomery," she returned, a choking sensation in her throat rendering it difficult for her to speak, as she looked into those lovely, imploring eyes. "You *must* remain with her; no other could do for her as you can; and even if your physician should consent, I could not, that you should risk her life by taking her away. My servants, my house, and anything that I have are yours to command as long as you may need them."

Cecile went over to her and clasped her hand gratefully.

"I thank you," she said, simply, but with dewy eyes.

Then unable to say more, she returned to her post at the bedside and sat down to watch her child.

She had fought her battle—she had won, and Helen Langley was no more to her now than if she had not existed.

The position which Mrs. Scherman had assumed surprised Dr. Mortimer somewhat. From her previous dignity and coldness to him he had expected to be obliged to argue the question of Cecile's being allowed to remain with Daisy, but he saw now that he had not done her justice. She was a noble woman at heart, and when she comprehended the wrong that had been done she was eager to do all in her power to help the right to conquer.

Her hearty acquiescence in Cecile's request, however, drove Mrs. Langley into a raging passion, and she flounced angrily from the room.

Dr. Mortimer then went to Cecile and gave her his directions for the day.

"I will drop in again during the afternoon, and I know I do not need to charge you to be very watchful," he said, smiling in her face, which was fast losing its tense lines of agony, although still anxious and worn.

He shook hands with Mrs. Scherman in a hearty fashion, and then went away, feeling quite content over that morning's work and its promise for the futnre.

As he closed the door after him, Mrs. Scherman glided softly to Cecile's side, laid her hand gently upon her shoulder, and bending down kissed her.

"How you must have suffered!" she said, tearfully. "I think I should die if anybody should take one of my darlings from me. I have three, too, and you have had only one. Dear Mrs. Montgomery, I will do all in my power to help you save your precious little girl."

It was very sweet and comforting to hear these kind words after all her sorrow and pain, and they nearly unnerved our brave heroine.

For one moment she leaned her golden head against

Mrs. Scherman's shoulder, and let the diamond drops have their way; then, with a look which her companion never forgot, she touched her lips to the hand that rested on her, murmuring:

"God bless you! I shall always love you for this."

Then Mrs. Scherman also went softly out, and Cecile was left alone with her recovered treasure.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DAWN OF RETRIBUTION.

MRS. SCHERMAN, on leaving Cecile, went directly to Mrs. Langley's room, her heart burning with indignation against the woman whom, until that moment, she had loved and trusted as her dearest friend.

"How could you do it, Helen?" she asked, reproachfully, after she had extorted from her something more of the circumstances of Daisy's abduction.

"I think there is no need of discussing that question any further," she answered, curtly. "What I did was done for the good of the child, and I feel perfectly justified in the course which I pursued. I could not endure the thought that a *Montgomery* should be reared in poverty, and she would be a great deal better off in my care. Think of the advantages that I could give her. I have no children of my own, and I could lavish every luxury upon her. But I did not think *she* would ever suspect me of having taken her, or that she would be able to trace me here if she did," Mrs. Langley concluded, with an injured air.

Mrs. Scherman shuddered and wondered how she could ever have been so deceived in the character of the woman before her.

"I think I should hate any one who would even propose to take one of my children from me, and how much more to *rob* me of one of them. A mother's love for her children is the most sacred thing on earth, Helen, and what a crime it is to violate it!" she said, almost sternly.

"It will do very well for you to talk thus, for you have plenty of means, and can give your children everything they need; but it is different in this case. Cecile Montgomery could never bring up Daisy as *my brother's* child should be reared and educated, for she has to

earn every penny with her own hands," Mrs. Langley retorted, arrogantly, and forgetting who had been the cause of all Cecile's poverty and her need to toil.

"Yes, Dr. Mortimer has told me something of her struggles, and her noble conquest over adversity. But surely, this should not have been; your brother was very wealthy, and his child is entitled to her father's property!" Mrs. Scherman replied, with a searching look into Mrs. Langley's face.

"Of course she is entitled to it, and will have it when she reaches a proper age," Helen returned, with a guilty flush.

"Who has charge of his property? Who is Daisy's guardian?"

"My husband has charge of his business, and no one has been appointed guardian, for we have no actual proof of his death."

"But of course there must be a large income yearly from his estate—what becomes of that?" Mrs. Scherman demanded.

She was determined to get at the bottom of the matter. She felt that she had a right, after what had occurred, to know something of the circumstances.

"It is added to the principal, I suppose," Helen said, reluctantly, and with averted glance.

Mrs. Scherman's dark eyes flashed with scorn and indignation.

"And do you not consider that Mrs. Montgomery is entitled to a portion of that income to help her rear her child in a proper manner? Can it be possible that you have allowed that frail, beautiful woman to struggle on year after year, unaided, to support herself and the little one, for whom you *profess* to feel so much affection—keeping from her the means that rightfully belong to her? Would your brother *uphold* you in any such heartless proceeding? Helen, I fear I have been greatly deceived in your character. I am shocked and grieved beyond expression by what I have learned to-day, and I tell you plainly, that my deepest sympathies are with that poor, wronged woman upstairs."

She had spoken with deep feeling, and her noble face glowed with lively compassion and emotion.

"Very well, let her keep them, then. I shall not presume to interfere, and I suppose I am to understand, from what you have said, that *this* is to be the end of *our* friendship," Mrs. Langley said, bitterly, and rising as she spoke.

"I cannot tell you how sorry I am that anything of this nature should have occurred to interrupt it," Mrs. Scherman said, gently and regretfully, while tears filled her eyes, "but I cannot uphold you, Helen, in the great wrong that you have done, and I am obliged to confess that my regard for you has suffered very materially on account of it; it could only be restored by a proper acknowledgment and restitution on your part, and by a full and complete reconciliation between you and your brother's wife, or as full as might be possible after all that she has suffered through you. She is a noble woman—a *grand* woman, Helen! Few could ever have battled so bravely and fearlessly against so many opposing forces as she has done."

"You are pleased to be enthusiastic over my brother's wife with her pretty face and artful eyes, Mrs. Scherman. I think it will be best for me to retire without further parley, and leave her victor in the field," was the angry retort of the baffled woman, and she proceeded to put her threat into execution at once, and a few hours later her trunks were packed and she took a formal leave of her early friend and repaired to the Palace Hotel, where she intended to remain a few days—or until she should learn that Daisy was in a fair way to recover.

Cold and heartless as she naturally was, she had been terribly frightened by the child's illness. It seemed to her, when Dr. Mortimer had told her that she had diphtheria, as if the knell of doom had been sounded for her, and *she* would be the cause of her death.

Daisy had fretted and annoyed her exceedingly by her continual grieving for her mother, and she had upon several occasions angrily chastised her. During the night before she had taken cold, she awoke about mid-

night and began to cry bitterly for the dear one whom she missed so much, and Mrs. Langley, her patience entirely exhausted, had lifted her out of bed to the floor, telling her she must stand there in the dark until she ceased crying.

The little one, frightened nearly to death by such harsh measures, sank in a heap upon the carpet, sobbing as if her heart would break; and Mrs. Langley, too sleepy to realize the danger of leaving her long there, turned over and dropped almost immediately into a sound slumber. When she awoke an hour later, she was startled to find that Daisy, exhausted with her grief, had fallen asleep on the floor.

She sprang up and took her into bed, holding her in her arms and trying to warm her chilled little body against her own; but the mischief was done, and she knew now that if she died *she* would be her *murderess.*

And with this fact so heavy on her conscience, it is no wonder that she could not leave San Francisco until she knew that Daisy was out of danger.

Besides this, she began to have a suspicion of Dr. Mortimer's feelings regarding Cecile. She had seen his tender, solicitous look whenever his eyes rested upon her, and she had remarked the glance of admiration with which he had regarded her when she stood so boldly up and confronted her, defying her and warning her to let her alone henceforth, and she had some curiosity to know how the affair would terminate.

Daisy slept most of the day after that stormy scene, only arousing now and then to take the nourishment they gave her, looking up into that fond face bending over her with such a grateful, satisfied look, and then dropping contentedly off to sleep again.

She was really better, for a gentle perspiration had replaced the burning fever, her breathing continued easy, and her throat did not appear to be so painful; and now that that poisonous membrane had been expelled, there was a reasonable hope that she would recover.

"She will be weak and delicate for a long time," Dr. Mortimer said when he came again that afternoon, "but

with the care that *you* will give her, a good nourishing diet, and her naturally vigorous constitution, I feel safe in saying that she will get well," and Cecile's eyes looked the gratitude which her lips could not utter.

Four days later his little patient had improved so much, he said he thought there would be no danger in removing her to Mrs. Lawson's house, and this Cecile was anxious to do, as she did not feel comfortable to intrude longer upon Mrs. Scherman, notwithstanding her unceasing kindness and attention to her, and her efforts to make the obligation as light as possible.

She even begged her to remain another week, or until Daisy was able to sit up, assuring her that it was a pleasure to her to have them there.

But Cecile preferred to go, and on a bright, warm day they arranged a little cot for Daisy, and moved her in a close carriage from that luxurious mansion on Nob Hill to Mrs. Lawson's less pretentious but equally as pleasant dwelling.

"I shall either come or send to inquire for this darling every day," Mrs. Scherman said, bending down to kiss the little pale face as they were carrying the child out, "and," she continued, smiling, as she took Cecile warmly by the hand, "I shall always consider that I have something of a claim upon your friendship after this, Mrs. Montgomery. I am *proud* to have made your acquaintance."

Cecile was deeply touched by her words, and went away breathing blessings upon the noble-hearted woman who had espoused her cause so heartily, and had spared nothing for her or Daisy's comfort during their sojourn with her.

But grief came to the object of their anxious care, notwithstanding all their efforts to shield her from exposure or fatigue. She took cold and was threatened with a relapse of the terrible disease, and another season of weary watching and anxiety followed.

Mrs. Langley had sent to inquire for her every day while she remained at Mrs. Scherman's, and always received some kind message in return from that lady, and

after she was removed, and she learned of the serious illness which followed, she became tenfold more anxious than before.

Had she dared to do so, she would have forced her way into the sick-room and taken up her post beside the child, for the little one's beauty had completely won her heart, and she was more anxious over her danger than she had ever been over anything in her life before. But she had not courage to face that outraged mother again, and was therefore obliged to content herself by haunting the vicinity of the house, riding by many times in the day, and always stopping to inquire once.

The third evening after Daisy's removal she drove slowly by, looking up longingly at the windows of the room which Cecile occupied, and as she did so the young mother crossed the room, and her shadow was outlined upon the curtain, while she seemed to be weeping, for her proud head was bowed and her face was covered with her handkerchief.

Another moment and Dr. Mortimer came and stood beside her, laying his hand upon her shoulder and bending toward her—very tenderly, it appeared to that sharp-eyed, watching woman passing in the street—and speaking earnestly to her.

Helen Langley's face flushed a hot, anxious crimson, and her heart bounded with an awful fear.

She ordered her driver to stop, alighted as quickly as her trembling limbs would permit, went up the steps and rang the bell.

"How is the child?" she breathlessly demanded of the servant who came the door.

"Very bad, marm—dying, the doctor fears."

"*Dying!*" her stiffening lips repeated, while every atom of color fled from her face.

"Yes, marm; the croup have set in, and the doctor thinks there's no chance for her."

The woman leaned against the door for support, every spark of hope dying out of her heart.

"Dr. Mortimer lives here, doesn't he?" she asked, after a moment, while the servant wondered why she should be so overcome by what he had told her.

"Yes, marm; those are his rooms up there where you see the bright light, but the lady has had them this many a day, and there is where the little one is dying—hark!"

He stopped suddenly as a hoarse, labored sound reached them; it was the painful breathing of little Daisy, who was indeed very near the verge of eternity.

Mrs. Langley could bear no more; she turned and went away with a groan, feeling as if the brand of Cain was already stamped upon her brow.

If she had not stolen the child and brought her hither, she doubtless would have been well and happy at this moment in her pretty home in New York.

Too late she repented of that rash act which had cost her the friendship and respect of her dearest friend, and the life of her brother's child.

But the dawn of a day of retribution was at hand.

On returning to her hotel, she found a telegram containing the most startling news awaiting her.

Her husband had met with an accident, was severely injured, and she was notified to return immediately.

Almost wild with excitement and nervousness, she hastily packed her trunks, and succeeded in catching the eastward-bound evening express just as it was on the point of leaving the station at Oakland.

She now realized something of the suffering which Cecile had experienced during that long, wearisome journey, for it seemed to her as if it would never end; and when at length it was over, and she had reached her home, it was to find that Colonel Langley had breathed his last twenty-four hours previous, and she was a widow.

Will it shock you, gentle reader, to be told that almost the first question this strange woman asked, upon being told that her husband was no more, was:

"Did he make a will?"

"No, madam," her physician answered, stiffly; "Colonel Langley was thrown from his carriage, striking his head violently against the curbstone, and he has not been conscious a moment since."

The colonel had just returned from Washington, where he had been for several weeks; his man met him

at the station with a pair of spirited horses, which took fright on their way home at a boy trying to send up a kite, became unmanageable, overturning the carriage and dashing him to the pavement, and his wordly career was thus suddenly ended. He was believed to be very wealthy, but if there was no will very little of his property would come to his wife, and it was, perhaps, this fact rather than grief for his untimely end, which threw her into those violent hysterics which lasted all the night through.

Nor was this all.

The next morning, when she was calmer, she went below to the library to look over the mail matter which a servant had told her had been accumulating during her absence.

When she left home she had expected that her husband would be back and forth, and had arranged for him to forward any letters that might come for her; but he had been detained all this time, and thus all her correspondence had been neglected.

Upon her husband's desk, among a mass of letters and papers, she found a bulky epistle, the handwriting upon which nearly made her scream with pain and fear; also a cablegram from Liverpool, England, which ran thus:

"DEAR HELEN:—Am safe and well; shall return very soon. Break the tidings gently to Cecile. Will write more fully. HOWARD MONTGOMERY."

The letter—a long one—was also from her long-absent brother, and in it was another, addressed to his wife; for, he said, she of course would know all about her, and he could think of no other way to communicate with her.

He gave a brief account of all that had transpired during his enforced idleness, and closed by saying that he would enter more into detail when he returned, and desired that she would reply immediately, so that he might know something of her and his other dear ones.

There were also two other letters of later date—anxious, impatient ones, wondering why she did not write to him, and begging for tidings of his wife and child.

It was almost too much—this avalanche of trouble sweeping down upon her all at once—and Helen Langley lay back in her chair, faint and sick at heart.

That her husband should be taken so suddenly, and die too, without making any will, was trouble enough, although she had never experienced any particular affection for him, any more than she would have felt for any one who gratified every selfish whim.

But how could she ever meet her brother—how could she ever face him with the burden of all her guilt on her heart? How account to him for her treatment of his wife and child—for refusing the maid or shelter in their stern necessity—for depriving them of their right to his property, and for stealing his little one from her mother and bearing her away to her death?

The letter and cablegram had both been sent the same day, and shortly after she left for California.

Her husband had been away, consequently they had been overlooked and neglected, and thus she found them, just in the midst of her other troubles.

"What shall I do?" she murmured, with a sinking heart. "I can never meet him and tell him about her; he would question me so closely that he would worm everything from me, and then I believe he would kill me. I am *afraid* to meet him. Where can he have been all this time?—what has happened to detain him?"

All day long she sat alone, trying to think what she should tell him; he was liable to come at any moment now, and he would demand a full account of everything concerning his cherished wife and child.

All night long she lay tossing restlessly upon her pillow, and there, while the vessel that was bringing her long-absent brother back to his country, was even then entering the harbor, she conceived a plot so diabolical, and so destructive of the happiness of those whom she both hated and loved, that even the spirits of evil themselves surrounding her must have vailed their faces and trembled.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE MISSING HUSBAND.

AND now the question naturally arises, "Where had the missing husband been during all this time?" What had happened to detain Howard Montgomery from the side of the wife and child to whom he was so devoted, and just at that important hour appointed for the sailing of the Britannic?

He thought, as he stepped from the vessel, that he would take a carriage, drive directly to the store where he had made his purchases, settle his bill, and return in the same way.

There were several carriages filled with passengers and loaded with baggage waiting there, but no empty ones, and he knew that if he waited for them to unload, the time would slip by, and Cecile would worry over his prolonged absence.

"I can walk the distance, while I should be waiting," he said to himself; and, acting upon the thought, he made his way out of the crowd and confusion, and, with quick, springing steps, turned toward McCleod & Co., dealers in woolen goods, rugs, shawls, hose, etc.

Turning to the right, as he left the wharf, he passed into an alley, which seemed deserted, and which he thought would cut off something of the distance, and was proceeding at a brisk pace, when a dark-browed, swarthy, but respectably-dressed man suddenly turned a corner just before him, and approached.

The sidewalk was very narrow, and, as the stranger passed, he stumbled and fell against Howard, nearly causing him to lose his equilibrium.

At the same instant he felt a hand slipped into the inner breast-pocket of his coat, and he knew that he was being robbed. He recovered himself almost im-

mediately, and, as the man bowed obsequiously, "begged pardon," and was about to make off, he seized him by the wrist in a vise-like grip.

"Ha! my man," he said, sternly, "so your blunder was intentional—you are a thief; but I think you have made a slight mistake this time."

While he was speaking the villain had uttered a peculiar whistle, while with his free hand he dexterously slipped Howard's wallet, which he had taken from him, into an unseen pocket, and then grappled with him.

The wallet contained his letter of credit and money, besides his steamer tickets and other important papers, and its loss would entail great trouble and annoyance upon him; while he saw at once that the struggle to recover it would have to be a desperate one.

He looked anxiously around for help, but the alley was in the rear, and between two rows of warehouses used for storage, and there was no one in sight at that moment.

He lifted up his voice and shouted with all his strength for a policeman; then by a dexterous movement he freed one of his hands and hit his antagonist a stinging blow between the eyes, which caused him to reel, but did not make him release his hold upon him.

The next instant some one from behind had tripped him up, and he lay for a moment at full length upon the pavement.

But it was only for a moment, for he sprang to his feet again, facing two rogues, now, instead of one.

He hit boldly out right and left, sending the newcomer against the wall with a force which almost stunned him, while, as he gripped the other in another effort to recover his stolen property, he saw a policeman not far off hastening to the scene.

Both villains saw him, also, and instantly seizing Howard by the arms, began crying, loudly: "Stop thief! stop thief!" at the same time beckoning the officer to hasten his movements.

Our unfortunate friend now found himself in a most trying situation, being made to appear like the culprit

instead of the injured party, while his personal aspect was certainly very much against him.

There was a great rent in his coat, caused by the struggle, and it was covered with dust and dirt from his fall; his hat lay battered and soiled upon the pavement, his face was flushed, and his hair disheveled.

"Here, Mr. Officer, we have a thief for you, captured right in the act," cried one of the men, as the policeman arrived upon the scene of action; and before Howard could utter one word in defense, he began giving a graphic account of how he had attempted to pick his pocket as he was passing through the alley, and doubtless would have succeeded had not the other come to his assistance.

This story was corroborated by Howard's second assailant, of course; and as he certainly was more disreputable in his appearance just then, with his soiled and disarranged clothing, his flushed countenance and anxious looks, the officer immediately took him into custody.

He attempted to give his version of the story, but was constantly interrupted and contradicted by his accusers in such a manner that the policeman could get no clear idea of it.

Howard at last told him, however, that if he would take him to the hotel where he had been stopping during his stay in Liverpool, he could easily convince him of the truth of his assertions.

This the officer consented to do, much to the dismay of the two thieves, who thought they were going to get out of the difficulty without any trouble.

They became quite indignant, saying they could not be detained just then—important business called them another way, and so forth; but they were curtly informed that their presence would be necessary, and accordingly they took up a line of march for the hotel designated.

As they were turning the corner of the street upon which it was located, they were nearly run into by a man who appeared very anxious and flurried and in great haste.

It was the man of whom Howard had purchased the shawls and rugs the day before.

He felt relieved instantly, for he thought there would be no further difficulty about his identity; but his heart grew heavy again as the man angrily exclaimed:

"Ha! here you are at last; I've found you, and now I want my money. What do you think of yourself, running off at this rate, and cheating honest people out of their just dues?"

"My dear sir," Howard answered, respectfully, "I was just on my way to settle the bill when those wretches attacked me and robbed me of my pocket-book containing my steamer tickets, my letter of credit, and all the money I had. They declare that the matter is just the reverse, however, and we were on the way to the hotel where I stopped to prove my identity."

"Well, I can identify you easily enough, and you can pay over that little amount as quickly as possible," was the gruff response.

"That rascal there has my wallet in his possession, and if you can make him deliver it up I will gladly pay what I owe you. I demand that he be searched, and you will not only find what I have already mentioned, but important letters and papers bearing my name," Howard said, pointing to the rascal who had first attacked him, and turning authoritatively to the officer.

The villain took off his hat and bowed with the utmost politeness to the woolen merchant.

"I beg pardon," he said, showing a set of very white teeth in an insinuating smile, "but the fellow is trying to lead you into a mistake. He attempted to rob *me*, without, however, accomplishing his object, I am happy to say, and was arrested almost in the act. Nevertheless I am perfectly willing to be searched, if that will expedite matters, for I am in considerable of a hurry," and he immediately began to empty his pockets; but there was nothing in them that looked at all like Howard's property. The other man was examined with the

same result. Upon this the woolen merchant began to rave and swear, telling that he had just been to the hotel designated to get his pay, and was told that his debtor had gone to the steamer that was to sail that day, and he was hastening with all possible speed to catch him before the vessel should put off.

The officer laughed mockingly at this account.

"Well," he said, "I don't think there will be much use in going to the hotel now—your identity is clear enough, it seems. I'll march you into camp, and this thing can be settled before a judge to-morrow morning;" and he immediately faced about with his prisoner.

A feeling of despair took possession of Howard at this. Nearly an hour had already elapsed since he left the steamer, and Cecile would be wild with anxiety if he did not soon return; and, if the vessel should sail without him, what would she do without tickets or money to pay her passage?—for he well knew she had not enough for that purpose.

"I have a wife and child on board the Britannia," he said, the cold perspiration starting out upon his forehead.

"Can't help it, sir; you should have thought o' that before ye began to cut up your tricks," was the cool retort of the official.

The indignant blood leaped to the insulted man's cheeks at this; but he knew he was powerless to retaliate.

"At least take me to the steamer, and let me tell my wife what has occurred!" he pleaded.

"No, sir; haven't any time to waste in that way," replied the officer.

"But she has no tickets; they were in my wallet, and that wretch has them—and she will be very much distressed if the vessel should sail and she has no word to let her know why I am detained."

The "wretch" referred to shrugged his shoulders, with a supercilious smile, and tipped the policeman a knowing wink.

"No, you don't, my man! I'm too sharp for you to

play any such game as that upon me," Howard's custodian returned, adding:

"I'm not at all sure you have either wife or child on shipboard or anywhere else. It may be another trick of yours to get into a crowd and give me the slip."

"What shall I do?" Howard cried, turning deathly pale, and beginning to realize that he had fallen into serious trouble.

"You'll have to wait until the next steamer, and *perhaps* longer," returned the man, with grim humor.

"I *cannot* wait! I must go! I must see my wife! Have you no mercy?" Howard demanded, with white lips, as a neighboring clock warned him of the passing time.

"Plenty for them that need it. Come on."

"I will not!" he cried; and, with the energy of despair, he tore himself from the grasp of the officer, and would have succeeded in making his escape if the wretch who had robbed him had not darted forward and seized him.

"You're a fine fellow, no doubt," the policeman said, when he had him once more by the arm, "but not *quite* quick enough this time; and now if you don't go quietly I shall have to put the darbies on."

He took them from one of his capacious pockets as he spoke.

Howard recoiled.

He could not submit to the disgrace of being manacled.

"I will go," he said, hoarsely, but with a look of despair in his eyes.

How would his idolized wife ever bear the terrible ordeal awaiting her!

The officer hooked his arm within that of his prisoner and led him to the nearest station-house, and as it was too late to go before the proper officials for examination that day, he was locked up for the night.

It would be difficult indeed to describe the feelings of the aristocratic Howard Montgomery as he was thus marched like a common felon to his dismal cell, to await

his trial for theft; but this disgrace did not compare with the misery he suffered as he thought of his fair young wife on shipboard, sailing away without him, in the midst of strangers, with no one to care for and wait upon her during the long and tedious voyage, and without money sufficient to meet the necessary expenses of the journey.

"I will telegraph her the instant I am free," he thought as he sat considering the matter, "and she will get it immediately on her arrival. I will tell her to go to Griswold and get all the money she needs, and I will sail on the next steamer."

But the startling question arose:

"Where will you get funds to pay your passage?"

"I have my watch and diamonds," he said; "I can sell them and get money."

But even as he spoke he put his hand to his shirt-front and found that an expensive solitaire was gone. That, too, had been torn from him during the melee. But he still had his watch and sleeve-buttons, which were set with diamonds, and these would realize sufficient to pay his passage home.

It was well, perhaps, that he could not foresee what the future held in store for him, for even his strong, resolute nature could not have borne to anticipate it.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN THE TOILS.

IT WAS late the next day before Howard Montgomery was brought forth from his cell for his examination, and as he entered the court-room his personal appearance was even less prepossessing than it had been the day before.

The place of his confinement during the night was filthy in the extreme—damp, moldy, and hung with cobwebs and carpeted with dust.

The miserable pallet with which his cell was provided was so foul that he could not make up his mind to lie upon it, even had he not been too wretched to sleep, and he had sat all the long night through upon the dusty, broken chair—the only other article of furniture that the place contained.

He had taken a severe cold which had inflamed his eyes, his face was haggard and unwashed, his hair uncombed—for he had been supplied with no conveniences for arranging his toilet; his clothing was torn and covered with dust, and altogether he was a forlorn-looking object.

True, his apparel was of the finest texture and most approved style; his manner and bearing that of a gentleman, his language well chosen and refined, but his looks were not in his favor, and there was so much evidence brought to bear against him that the court did not appear to regard him with much clemency from the first.

The wretch who had robbed him testified to having been assaulted by him, and his statements were corroborated by his partner in crime, while the policeman appeared to believe he had caught a rogue almost in the act of committing "larceny from the

person." McCleod & Co. claimed that he had bought goods of them, and then taken passage on board a steamer bound for America, with intent to defraud them of their dues.

Howard told his story in a straightforward, manly way; but he had only his own word to prove his statements, and this against so many opposing witnesses did not amount to anything.

The proprietor of the hotel where he had stopped had been summoned to appear in his defense; but even he now seemed to regard him with suspicion, and his evidence was given in such a reluctant and non-committal manner that it did him full as much harm as good.

He identified him as having been a guest at his hotel, corroborated his statement regarding his wife and child, and said he *seemed* to be a man of means, and that he had promptly settled his bill there; but that was all he knew about him or could say in his favor, and there was not another individual in all Liverpool to whom he could appeal in his trying situation.

The villain who had caused him all this misery had assumed the garb and manner of a gentleman, and carried off his part in the drama with such a high head, dwelling with such apparent gratitude upon the fact that that other man, "who was a stranger to him, should have come so opportunely to his assistance," that the evidence seemed conclusive against Howard, and the judge could do no other way, had he been inclined—which he was not, as, for some reason best known to himself, he had a special grudge against all Americans—than to sentence him to a term of three years in the county prison.

Howard, of course appealed from this decision, but as he was powerless to give bonds, he was sentenced to his place of confinement to await the issue of the case at the next term of the court.

It was a bitter experience for him, but he hoped to be able to communicate in the meantime with some of his friends in the United States, and settle the matter satisfactorily.

But first of all he must let Cecile know something of what had befallen him, for what must she think, what must she be suffering even now on his account?

It drove him nearly frantic to think of it, and of how cunningly he had been robbed and outwitted by that rascal who had so boldly faced him in court with his plausible and artfully concocted story, and for hours he paced his cell like some wild animal in his cage.

He tried to bribe his keeper to take one of his sleeve-buttons, sell it, and buy him pen and paper, so that he might write to his wife and also send a cablegram to her, that upon her arrival she might know that no serious accident had befallen him, and that he would return at the earliest possible moment.

But the keeper was suspicious; he believed that valuable sleeve-button was also stolen property, and accordingly he refused to have anything to do with it, lest he, too, get into trouble by means of it.

Howard next tried him with his watch, although he did not like to part with it—being a very valuable time-piece—but the emergency demanded almost any sacrifice.

He, however, met with no better success in this proposition, and, harassed and irritated almost beyond endurance, he was forced to realize that nothing but patience would avail him anything until after his trial.

But the cold which he had taken proved to be a very severe one. It seemed to increase as the day went by; he grew feverish, his head and limbs ached so that it became almost impossible for him to sit up, and at length, all unmindful of the filthy state of his cot, he threw himself wearily upon it, and there the jailer found him, when he came to bring him his coarse fare at night, tossing and raving with fever and delirium.

He was at once removed to the sick-ward, where he lay for weeks, writhing with brain fever in its worst form.

At one time he would call wildly and piteously for his wife and child, begging that they might not be taken

from him, reiterating again and again his innocence of the crime with which he was charged; then he would imagine himself contending with the wretch who had robbed him, and that scene would be enacted over again, until, exhausted by his violent contortions, he would lie, weak and panting, upon his couch, until another paroxysm seized him.

It was a terrible illness, and no one thought he would ever recover from it, but his strong constitution gained the mastery at length; the fever left him, and he began slowly to mend.

But as he regained his physical strength, it became apparent that his intellect was impaired.

He remembered nothing of the events which had so vividly haunted him during his sickness; he did not seem to realize where he was, or that strangers were waiting upon him, nor did he even remember his name, or speak those of either his wife or child.

As soon as his condition would admit of it, he was transferred to an asylum for insane paupers, and there, for nearly three years, he dragged out an existence almost too wretched to be credited.

The man who had charge of the institution was kind and humane, and when he found that the new inmate was harmless, he allowed him considerable liberty, and strove to interest him in some light outdoor exercise. As his health improved his mind became stronger, and at times he would seem to have sudden glimpses of the past, but they would almost as quickly fade away and his memory become a blank again.

A year passed thus, and then the keeper of the asylum suddenly sickened and died.

It was a sad day for the inmates of that miserable place when the good man was carried forth to his grave, for all under his care had been as kindly treated and cared for as circumstances would permit.

A successor was appointed almost immediately, and a new *regime* was instituted, and a hard one, indeed, for the poor inmates of that place.

The first time that Howard met this man after his in-

stallment he gave a violent start, and a nervous tremor shook his whole frame.

He put his hand to his head, as if some painful memory had suddenly returned to him, and uttered an unintelligible cry, half of recognition, half of fear.

The man did not see him until he heard the cry, which seemed to anger him, for he was a coward, and it startled him.

"What is the matter with you, you fool?" he demanded, fiercely, while he glared into the white face and startled eyes of his patient with a curious gaze.

Then he, too, appeared greatly astonished.

He turned very pale, and stood regarding him with something of terror in his look for several minutes.

Then recovering himself he continued, with a wicked leer, his evil eyes lighting with triumph and cruelty:

"Ha! do I find *you* here? What luck! I shouldn't wonder of I led you a fine dance before I get through with you."

Howard Montgomery stood motionless as a statue—stood as if he had been petrified by the words, staring blankly at the man, while back into the chamber of his brain the light of other days was flashing, illuming the darkness, and waking into action the faculties which so long had lain dormant and impotent.

"Villain!" he muttered, under his breath, while for the first time since his fearful illness his eyes flashed with recognition, memory resumed her sway, and he recalled all the past in one instant of time.

He saw before him the very man who had been the cause of all his misfortune, all his suffering, and the shock of meeting him thus had brought him to himself.

It was indeed the scoundrel who had attacked him in that deserted alley in Liverpool, and it was a strange freak of fate which had decreed that he should be appointed to superintend this asylum for insane paupers, and thus throw our unfortunate friend again into his cruel power.

He called himself Dr. Humphrey Grigg; but what wires he had pulled, or through whose influence he had

managed to get appointed to this position, no one save himself ever knew; and it was a sad day for the inmates of that place when this monster in human form came there to rule over them.

As Howard uttered that one word, and he saw that he also was recognized, he scowled fiercely.

"Aha!" he said, "I think you must be one of the dangerous inmates. How came you loose?"

Howard's eyes blazed angrily, but memories were crowding so rapidly upon him, and he was becoming so excited, that he turned away without deigning any reply, anxious to get away by himself and think out the strange problems of the past in quiet.

"You insolent dog! why don't you answer me?" cried the keeper, infuriated by his manner, and striding up to him he laid a heavy hand upon his shoulder.

Howard drew back from him, looking him full in the eyes.

He was terribly excited, and he felt that it would take very little more provocation to make him strike his foe senseless at his feet.

"It will be best for you to let me alone, or I will not answer for the consequences," he said, in low, hoarse tones.

"I thought you were dangerous the moment I looked at you; now I'm sure of it, and if you're beginning to rave we shall have to put you where you can't do anybody harm," returned Dr. Grigg, and calling two men who were at work near by, he ordered them to take Howard to the strong room and lock him up.

They looked surprised, and hesitated, for he was considered the most gentle and harmless of all the patients.

"What do you mean? Don't you intend to do as I tell you?" passionately demanded their master, emphasizing his words with a terrible oath; and without more ado they led their unresisting prisoner away and locked him up in a room kept expressly for dangerous cases, and from that hour his life became almost unbearable.

The man who had so wronged him seemed to gloat

over the fact that he was in his power, and took delight in torturing him to the very verge of desperation.

He made inquiries, and learned how it happened that he found him in that wretched place, when he supposed him in prison serving out his sentence for his own crime.

He knew that he had been very ill, but supposed that he should be summoned to appear at his second trial whenever it should occur; but as he had not been notified, he thought likely that his evidence had not been required.

He saw now, however, that whatever his condition may have been heretofore, he had by some means suddenly recovered his reason; and he knew that if the authorities should discover it he would probably be removed, and the long postponed trial would occur now.

But he did not intend that the authorities should know it; he meant to keep his victim in his power, and amuse himself at his expense; so he gave out the impression that his disease had taken a new form, that he had become dangerous, and it was necessary to keep him closely confined.

He was kept locked day and night in the strong room before referred to, fed upon the coarsest and most miserable fare, clad in most repulsive garments, and his daily life became more intolerable than the most abject slavery could have been.

Every day the keeper went to him and spent an hour in torturing him—reviewing that scene in the alley, twitting him about that unpaid bill at McCleod & Co.'s, taunting him about his wife and child and his enforced absence from them, and abusing him in the most wanton manner.

Usually Howard kept utter silence before him, disdaining him any reply, although many a time it seemed as if human nature could endure no more. Yet, in spite of all, he continued to improve mentally.

That terrible shock had restored his thinking and reasoning powers, and all his energies were now bent upon one thought—escape.

But he was so closely confined and watched that this

seemed next to an impossibility. and the months lengthened into years, until hope began to grow dim again and courage to wane.

One day, however, his tormentor came to his door, which was composed partially of a heavy grating, and began his usual abuse.

While there, one of his assistants came to him, asking him for a bill which some one wanted.

Dr. Grigg took his wallet from his pocket, from which he extracted the desired paper, and gave it to the man, who immediately went away again.

The instant that Howard's eyes lighted on that wallet, it seemed as if every nerve in his body had become a thing of life.

He felt for a moment like shouting aloud, but controlling himself, he turned quickly and looked out of his window to hide the wild look of joy in his eyes.

He had recognized his *own wallet*—the very one that had been stolen from him on that fatal day!

It was an expensive one, of Russia leather, and fastened with silver clasps.

One of these clasps was peculiar—although it *looked* exactly like the other—being hollow, and opening with a tiny secret spring, and upon the inside of the face of it he had had his name engraved.

Nor was this all.

For greater security against losing, or rather, for identifying it in case it should be lost, he had, before leaving home, ripped apart one of the pockets and written his full name with ink upon it, and then had the pocket stitched together again.

The wallet, he noticed to-day, had been very well preserved, although it was somewhat soiled by handling; but, though he never would think of using it again should it ever come into his possession, he felt that in it, and in it alone, lay his salvation—his hope of escape, and also the retribution of the wretch who had caused him all his misery.

How, he could not yet determine, but hope had gathered new strength in his heart from the trifling incident of that day.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE TABLES TURNED.

ABOUT a week after the incidents related in the last chapter, and on the very day that Daisy Montgomery was three years of age—at the very hour, indeed, when she was being borne, as rapidly as steam and wheels could carry her, away from her home and the fond mother who was so wildly searching for her, a strange event transpired to interrupt the miserable monotony of Howard Montgomery's life.

Two physicians—one English, the other American—who were interested in asylums for, and the treatment of the insane, started forth upon a tour of investigation, and, among other institutions, visited the pauper asylum where Howard had been so long and so cruelly confined.

Dr. Grigg always received all visitors in a bland and suave manner, and to-day he was especially affable, for he saw at a glance that his callers were men of no ordinary stamp, and that they were thoroughly interested in this branch of medical science.

He professed to be greatly pleased that they should manifest a sympathy for the sad work in which he was engaged, and conducted them over the establishment, explaining in a voluble manner how it had hitherto been managed, and what improvements he had already made and still hoped to make.

"Things were not at all as he wished to have them," he said, as he saw the looks of blank astonishment which the two gentlemen exchanged upon beholding the miserable condition of the inmates, "but the appropriation was so inadequate, he was so hampered and restricted, that he could not do justice to either them or himself. But he trusted that time and perseverence would, in a

measure, remedy many evils, although he did wish that some philanthropist would interest himself in the matter, lay it before Parliament at the next session, and try to get a larger appropriation for all such institutions."

Dr. Grigg was certainly a good talker, and he seemed peculiarly gifted in being able to draw comfort from the most limited resources, his visitors thought.

"Most of my patients are quiet and harmless," he said, as they were passing through one of the corridors. "I have but very few whom it is necessary to restrict at all, and only one whom I consider absolutely dangerous. He occupies yonder strong room," pointing to one at the end of the passage, which had a strong oaken door grated half way; "he is at times quite unmanageable and destructive, and I am obliged to keep him closely confined all of the time. Perhaps it will be just as well if we do not go nearer, as the sight of strangers sometimes sets him to raving."

The wretch would have gladly led his visitors away without allowing them to see the pale and sad-looking prisoner who occupied that miserable room, and in whose sorrowful eyes there burned no fire of insanity.

But one of the physicians had been watching him narrowly throughout the whole interview—he did not like the man at all—and he mistrusted that things were not so smoothly conducted as he would have them appear.

"Excuse me," he said politely, "but I am especially interested in these difficult cases, and if you will allow me I will step forward and have a look at the poor fellow."

Grigg could not forbid him, but he looked somewhat uneasy, and the stranger went his way while his companion stopped in the passage to remark upon the defective ventilation of the building, and to suggest some improvement in that line.

Dr. Anthony—he who was interested in dangerous cases—stole softly down the corridor to have a glance at the "madman" confined behind that heavy grating.

Howard was standing by the window, looking out

upon the hills beyond, and his profile only was visible.

He appeared not to be conscious that any one had approached the door, but at the first glance which George Anthony bestowed upon him, he uttered in a suppressed, horrified tone the startled words:

"My God!"

Howard turned suddenly to see who had spoken, and found himself confronted by an old college chum. "Heavens! Anthony!" he cried, the cold perspiration starting out all over him in great beads, "how came you here?"

Then, as his friend continued speechless from surprise, he went on in low, excited tones, while he trembled so violently that he was obliged to grasp a chair for support:

"Hush! don't for God's sake let that wretch yonder know that you ever saw me before, or I am lost."

"Why do I find you *here*—in this dreadful place?" Dr. Anthony demanded, his face as pale as Howard's own.

"I cannot tell you now, but I have suffered enough to drive ten men crazy."

"You are not insane," interrupted his friend, searching his face keenly; "you *have not been* insane."

"I am in my right mind as much as you are—but I had a terrible sickness, and for a time lost my reason; but more of that hereafter. Now, do as I tell you, and you can save me." Howard continued very rapidly, and scarcely above a whisper: "Go to the city, get out a warrant for the arrest of the wretch who has charge of this place—he is a thief, and I can prove it if you'll bring an officer here. The proof of what I tell you is on his person at this moment; and, besides all this, he has kept me confined here, torturing me beyond endurance for two years, which of itself is sufficient cause for his arrest."

"But I do not understand how you ever came to such a pass—*you*, with an unlimited fortune at your command!" pursued Dr. Anthony, with a glance over his shoulder to see if he was observed.

His friend and Grigg had moved a little further down the passage, and he felt emboldened to question Howard a little more fully.

"He—that villain who has charge here—tried to rob me on the very day that I was to have sailed for home. In our struggle a policeman appeared, and he managed to turn the tables upon me, making it appear that I was the thief instead of himself. I was arrested, convicted, and sentenced; but, after a long illness, which impaired my mind, being without friends or funds, I was sent here. At first I was kindly treated, but the former overseer suddenly died, and by a strange coincidence this wretch was appointed in his place; and, although for two years I have been as sane as anybody, he has kept me a close prisoner and a victim to his cruelty."

"Infamous!" exclaimed George Anthony, the hot, indignant blood surging over his face. "You shall not remain here another moment. My friend will help me, and we will liberate you this instant."

"No," Howard said, hurriedly; "it will be better to bring an officer here, arrest Grigg, and then the cause of all my trouble will be removed and beyond harming me or any one else; he is a monster who delights to torture those around him. Hush! they are coming; do not breathe a word to let him know you ever saw me before."

Howard turned away from his friend, and, feeling too weak to stand, sat down with his back to the door, and appeared to be looking absently from his window, as was his custom whenever any one visited the asylum.

Dr. Grigg and the English physician now came up, and the former said, glancing at Dr. Anthony somewhat curiously:

"You seem to be quite interested, sir, in my tough customer. What do make out of him?"

"I don't see but that he is quiet enough just now; I expected to find a perfect bear from your description," Dr. Anthony tried to say indifferently, but feeling as if he would like to smite the man to the ground.

For three years he and Howard Montgomery had shared the same rooms at college, and their friendship had been one of the few perfect things of this earth, and for a long time after they had gone their different ways in the world—one to the South to practice medicine, the other to the great metropolis—they had kept up a regular correspondence. But this had dropped off gradually, and for the past three or four years Dr. Anthony had heard nothing concerning the friend who had been so dear to him.

Nothing could have given him a greater shock than this encounter to-day—the proud, the aristocratic, the wealthy Howard Montgomery in such a vile den as this, clad in rags, with unshorn beard and unkempt hair! He could scarcely credit the evidence of his own eyesight even now, and he was so excited and wrought up by the encounter that it required all the force of his will to keep him from denouncing the keeper then and there, and rescuing his friend at once from his power.

"That's one of his tricks, you know," Grigg responded to his remark regarding the quietness of his prisoner, while he shot a suspicious glance at Howard. He had been on the "tenter-hooks" ever since Dr. Anthony left him, for he never allowed any one to go there alone; but his other visitor had kept him talking upon his favorite topic, "ventilation," and he could not follow him before.

"Sometimes," he continued, "he puts on this quiet manner to cheat visitors into the belief that he is all right; but he carries on at a rate to make up for it all after they are gone. I suppose he's been telling you that he is as sane as you," he concluded, watching the doctor closely.

"They all do that. I've seen insane people before," he returned, carelessly; "but he doesn't seem to be inclined to say anything to-day, does he? I've asked him several questions; I wanted to get an opportunity to look into his eyes, but he sits with his back to the door."

"I'll stir him up for you," Grigg returned, entirely reassured and deceived by Dr. Anthony's words. "Ho!

you scamp; right about face, and let these gentlemen have a look at you," he concluded, roughly.

But Howard remained as motionless as a block of stone. He would not have turned at that moment and exposed his white, agitated face for anything in the world. He knew it would betray him, while he had been seized with such a violent inward tremor that he could with difficulty keep his teeth from chattering audibly.

"Never mind; don't disturb him, it's of no consequence," George Anthony said, while he longed to choke the heartless, miserable villain for daring to address his friend in such a tone.

But he controlled himself, mentally vowing that he should pay dearly for it a few hours hence, and then turning abruptly away he walked from the place, followed by his friend and the keeper, who shot an angry glance at his victim as he went for his disobedience.

Four hours later this monster again sought his prisoner. He had intended returning immediately after the departure of his visitors, to take his revenge for the defiance which he had manifested before them, but several circumstances had transpired to detain him until now.

He carried a whip in his hand, for Howard of late had refused to obey his brutal commands and manifested such a spirit of defiance that, coward as he was, he thought it best to be protected in case of any emergency.

He locked the door, put the key in his pocket, and then stepped up to Howard, snapping the whip almost in his eyes.

"I'll see whether you'll face about when I tell you, you dog," he said, with a wicked leer.

And Howard did face about now with blazing eyes, white, compressed lips and clinched hands.

He had resolved that he would submit to this kind of abuse no longer.

He felt that it could not be very long before his friend would return to liberate him, and he would bear no more —he was a desperate man. All the wrongs which this

scoundrel had heaped upon him during the past two years arose before him, demanding to be avenged.

The personal abuse which he had suffered, the insulting language that he had endured, the vile food he had been obliged to eat in order to keep the breath of life in him, the filthy room he had occupied, the rags he had worn, all cried aloud for retribution.

"Keep away from me!" he cried in low, concentrated tones.

Grigg laughed mockingly to see him in this new mood; it promised him a pleasureable excitement, and he had no suspicion of the thunderbolts about to burst over his head.

With his heavy whip in hand, the door locked and the key in his pocket, he felt perfectly safe in carrying his barbarous amusement to any extent that he chose. "Keep away from you, eh!" he repeated, as he snapped the lash again, this time so near to Howard's head that it stirred the raven locks which lay upon his forehead.

He moved back a step or two, his face ghastly, the lines about his mouth hardening into an expression of resolution that should have warned his keeper.

"Putting on airs, are you, after the compliments the Yankee doctor paid you to-day! Well, it gives me a little variety, but I reckon I can take them out of you if I try."

He seemed to enjoy this unusual display of defiance on the part of Howard, and continued advancing upon him, laughing derisively as he swung his whip right and left. But he was altogether too confident of his power, and too intent upon his brutal pleasure, for, watching his opportunity, Howard darted forward, taking him unawares, and before he had a suspicion of his intention, dexterously tripped him and he fell heavily to the floor.

It was then but the work of an instant to get possession of his heavy whip, and planting one foot upon the fallen hero's heart, he stood looking down upon him a dangerous gleam in his eyes.

With a volley of the most horrible oaths Grigg commanded him to let him rise, while he struggled with all

his strength to lift that foot, planted so firmly upon his chest.

"*No, sir;* you have had *your* day, now *my* time has come," Howard returned, in tones so stern and relentless that the man shivered with fear, and he redoubled his efforts to escape from his captor.

"Keep still, or I shall knock you senseless with the butt of this whip," he continued; "it will do you no good to struggle; you cannot rise until I give you leave. I am not mad, but at this moment I have the strength of ten men;" and the man looking up into his set, determined face, realized the truth of what he said.

"You will not harm me," he pleaded, with a whimper. Howard's lip curled.

"If you will obey me, I will do you no injury; dare to disobey me and I will make your body one mass of livid welts with this whip, which you brought here to amuse yourself with at my expense," he said, coldly.

"Let me up and I will do anything you say, but I cannot lie here, your foot is crushing me," whined the coward.

"Put your hand in your pocket and give me the key to the door of this room," Howard commanded, without heeding his complaint.

Grigg's face grew white at this; he could endure anything better than the thought of losing his prey.

Then a cunning look leaped into his eyes.

"I haven't it; I did not lock the door when I came in; I forgot it; it is on the outside," he said.

"*You lie!* you never leave it on the outside; you *never* forget it. I saw you put it in your pocket. Give me the key," Howard retorted, sternly; and Grigg saw that it was worse than folly for him to refuse to obey. The look in his prisoner's eye meant business, and he reluctantly drew the key forth, holding it out to him.

Just as Howard's fingers were about closing over it, the wretch gave it a toss, and it fell with a ringing sound upon the floor three feet beyond his reach.

The trick took him by surprise, and he relaxed the pressure of his foot somewhat.

Quick as thought Grigg took advantage of this, sprang into a sitting posture, and, grasping Howard by the leg, tried to throw him.

But the whip lash suddenly descended with stinging force across his shoulders, for the young man's patience was exhausted, and it was his only mode of defense.

Grigg was a much more powerful man than he, even when he was in full strength, and he knew he must follow up the slight advantage he had won over him vigorously, or it would be the worse for him.

Fast and heavy the blows fell upon his tormentor, who shrank from them as a dog would have shrunk before his angry master, for a desperate man was wielding that whip, and his passion was so fierce and relentless that the wretch, fearing for his life, begged and pleaded for mercy in the most craven manner.

In the midst of this well-merited retribution, a clear, authoritative voice cried:

"Hold!"

CHAPTER XXV.

FREEDOM.

At that imperative command Howard suspended his chastisement, swung suddenly around, and saw three men peering in between the bars of the door upon the scene just described.

His thin, pale face lighted with joy, for he instantly recognized his friend, who had just returned with his companion and another man, whom Howard surmised was an officer.

He sprang for the key which Grigg had thrown upon the floor, bounded to the door, unlocked it, and threw it open.

The keeper, as soon as those merciless blows ceased, started to his feet and now came forward, foaming, and swearing, and vowing vengeance upon his castigator; but he dare not lay hands upon him again, for he still held that heavy whip, and he still felt the effects of his indignation too keenly to wish to test it further at present. He, too, recognized the two physicians who had visited him in the morning, and wondered, while at the same time he did not feel very comfortable at receiving a second call from them.

He saw the third gentleman also, and thought perhaps they had brought another doctor to go over the asylum; but he did not for a moment suspect their real object.

Upon their arrival, not finding the keeper in the room which he used for his office, they inquired of one of his assistants where he was, and were told that he was "having a tussel with the wild man," but he would call him at once if they desired.

Dr. Anthony, however, objected to this, saying they had returned to examine that very case, and he imme-

diately led the way to the place where Howard was confined, reaching the spot just as he was meting out the retribution so long delayed, but so richly deserved, upon the cowardly keeper.

He knew at once that they had come to liberate him —that his long imprisonment and suffering were over at last, and as he swung wide the door, he said:

"Come in, gentlemen. You have found me in a state of excitement, and perhaps it was rather beneath my dignity to take matters thus into my own hands; but human nature cannot bear everything, and the limit of my endurance was reached when this villain came here with this weapon in his hand, a little while since, and sought to drive me about like a dog. I wrenched the whip from him, and, as you see, have repaid a portion of the debt I owe him."

"Served him right, too!" Dr. Anthony muttered, with a lowering glance at the discomfited keeper, who, as yet unable to speak, stood wiping the perspiration from his crimson face with hands so nerveless and trembling that they could scarcely hold the handkerchief with which he was performing the operation.

The angry look from the physician served to bring him somewhat to himself, and he approached them in pretended alarm, saying:

"Stand back, if you please, or there is no knowing that you may not be served in the same way that I have been, for my patient is unusually dangerous just now. I know not what fortunate circumstance has brought you back here at this opportune moment, but I am greatly indebted to you, for without doubt you have saved my life. After you left this morning this poor fellow broke forth into the wildest raving. You remember I told you that the sight of strangers was liable to produce that effect," he said, glancing nervously at Dr. Anthony.

"I came to him several times," he proceeded, "and tried to soothe him, but without avail; and I was at last obliged to resort to force, much as I dislike to do so. But I miscalculated his strength; he got the best of me, and has nearly beaten the life out of me, as you per-

ceive," as he held out his still trembling hands, which were covered with livid welts from the blows that he had tried to ward off.

While Grigg was making this speech Dr. Anthony had exchanged glances with Howard, making signs to tell him that the stranger accompanying them was an officer, who had come prepared to avenge his wrongs.

With a deeply drawn breath, Howard Montgomery stood erect, tossed back the long dark locks from his forehead, and with a smile of scorn curling his handsome lips, he said:

"I shall not presume to contradict the statements just made, but, instead, proclaim this scoundrel, who *calls* himself *Dr.* Grigg, a thief, a perjurer, an abuser of the helpless and suffering, and a villain of the deepest dye——"

"Stand back!" Grigg interrupted, with an angry glance at him. "Look out, gentlemen, or he will spring upon one of you before you know it. I must insist that you retire and allow me to come out and lock the door, after which I shall be happy to confer with you."

As he spoke he tried to force them back and his own way out of the room.

"Not *quite* so *fast,* if you please, *Dr.* Grigg," laconically interposed the officer, and with ironical emphasis.

Then going to his side, he laid his hand heavily upon his shoulder, and continued:

"It becomes my duty to arrest you in the name of her majesty, the Queen.

"What!—what!—what!" gasped and stuttered the astonished man—"what does this mean?—what is the charge against me?"

"Well, there are several, if I'm not mistaken, and you're the fellow that I take you to be; but Mr. Montgomery's charges of theft and perjury will do for the present, I reckon," returned the officer, coolly.

The keeper flew into a tremendous passion at this, although his visitors could see that he grew white about the mouth at the remarks of the officer.

"Do you dare to do such a thing upon the evidence

of an insane man and a condemned criminal? I will not stand it—it is a scandalous proceeding, and I swear——"

"That will do, sir," interrupted the officer, not in the least disturbed by all this bluster. "Wait, and do your swearing before the judge. But these two physicians have treated the insane for years, and are prepared to make an examination of Mr. Montgomery's case, but meanwhile you are my prisoner."

The man swore a horrible oath.

"I won't be put under arrest," he screamed. "What proof have you?"

"The proof is upon his own person even now," interposed Howard, calmly.

"Very well, sir; we will search him," said the officer.

Grigg looked relieved at this; he never once thought of the wallet he had stolen three years previously.

"All right," he said, heartily; "search away as much as you like—you will find nothing," and he began to empty his pockets with great alacrity.

There were bills and papers, keys, bits of twine and rope, a jacknife and—the wallet.

"The proof is there," Howard said, pointing to it.

Grigg laughed coarsely, but gave Howard a startled glance nevertheless, while he unhesitatingly opened it and displayed its contents—a few notes, some silver, and several bills.

"I think you will find nothing there, gentlemen; and this wallet I have carried for years," he said.

"Yes, for two years and eight or ten months," Howard said, sternly; then, turning to the others, he continued:

"Gentlemen, that wallet is mine; I bought it four years ago in New York of Anderson, Phelps & Co., whose name you will find stamped in gilt upon it; and now, if you will allow me to take it for one moment, I can convince you that I am the rightful owner."

Grigg now began to look alarmed, and cried out that it was a shame for them to stand there and listen to the ravings of a madman, to the injury and ruin of a respectable subject of her majesty, the Queen.

But the officer sternly bade him be still, and passed the wallet to Howard, who deftly opened the clasp before mentioned, and then handed it back again.

"My name," he said, "is Howard Montgomery, as Dr. Anthony there can testify, for we were room-mates for three years. You will find 'H. Montgomery' engraved upon the inside of that silver clasp, which you perceive is hollow."

The officer and the two physicians examined it, and found the name as he had described.

Grigg grew livid with fear and rage, as he now comprehended that all this trouble had come upon him through his allowing a stranger to visit his victim unattended, and he inwardly cursed himself for his stupidity and neglect.

"Now, sir," continued Howard, "to still further prove my position, if you will take your knife and rip the stitching of the second pocket, you will find my full name written with ink upon the rough side of the leather."

The officer did as he was requested, the name was found, and then Howard related in as few words as possible the circumstances of his encounter with the villain, of his arrest, and the events which had occurred since, together with the suffering and abuse which he had endured at the hands of the wretch before them.

"It is all a lie," Grigg screamed, seeing that at last he was cornered, and with the most dreadful profanity.

Then, with an energy and agility born of despair, he made a bound for the door in a mad effort to escape. But the three strangers instantly closed around him, cutting off every hope in that direction.

The officer seized him by the arm, and by a dexterous movement slipped a pair of handcuffs upon his wrists, and he was now a prisoner indeed.

"*Dr.* Grigg, my fine fellow, I *know* you were in a hurry," he said, with ironical politeness, as he fastened them securely, "but we cannot be deprived of your agreeable society just yet; there are several little accounts to be settled first."

"You shall pay dearly for this," foamed the disappointed man; "a madman's word will never be taken in court."

"I am afraid the court will find altogether too much 'method in his madness' for your comfort," remarked Dr. Anthony, as he stepped forward and grasped Howard warmly by the hand.

"My friend," he said, manly tears springing to his eyes, "I never can tell you how startled and horrified I was to-day to find *you* in such a place as this; and if *he*," pointing to the vanished keeper, "had happened to be with me when I saw you, I should surely have betrayed myself and you, and he would have escaped arrest and the penalty he so richly deserves. What a life you must have led; what suffering you must have endured!"

Howard sank into the one chair in the room; his strength was all gone now that his deliverance was achieved, and it was several moments before he could command himself sufficiently to speak; while his friend, observing his emotion, was also so overcome that he was obliged to go to the window to hide his own agitation.

Presently, however, he approached the gentleman who had accompanied him.

"Howard," he said, leading him forward to his chum, "this is my friend, Dr. Forsyth, of London, and with whom I studied in Germany awhile. We have been making an extensive tour this summer, visiting asylums for the insane in different countries, and looking into their methods of treatment. I'm sure I cannot imagine what put the idea into our heads to come to this institution to-day, but I shall never cease to thank God that we did so."

"Amen!" said Dr. Forsyth, heartily, as he exchanged cordial greetings with Howard; and after a little more conversation that gentleman proposed that they should all get out of that place as soon as possible.

"Do you mean that *I* am to go to-day?" Howard asked, growing very white.

"Certainly; you did not suppose, I trust, that we intended leaving you behind?" replied Dr. Forsyth, reproachfully.

"But are there no formalities to be gone through with, no terms to be made before I can be free?" Howard asked, with trembling lips.

"No; you are just as free to go as we are, and we have a double carriage at the door, waiting to take you with us."

"But you forget that I was, in the eyes of the law, a criminal before I became an insane pauper," Howard persisted with some bitterness.

Hope had lain dormant so long that he could not realize even now the fact of his deliverance.

"We have forgotten nothing," Dr. Anthony said, huskily. "There will, of course, have to be another trial, but we have given bonds for you, and hold ourselves responsible for your appearance before the next assizes; and also," he added, more lightly, "for your good behavior as a lunatic."

"But look at me! my appearance will not be very creditable to either you or myself," Howard returned, glancing ruefully at his wretched garments.

"We won't give a thought to that now; I must get you out of this vile place," George Anthony said, with a shudder. "Besides," he added, "I have a light spring overcoat in the carriage that will cover you finely, and I imagine that we can confiscate a hat of some kind about the premises. "Come," and linking his arm within that of his early friend, he led him from the wretched abode where he had dragged out such a miserable existence for nearly three years.

"Come," the officer said to his prisoner, after the others had departed. *I* have a carriage waiting for *you.*"

"I will not," he answered hoarsely, and planted himself firmly against the side of the building in a resisting attitude.

"Oh! but I think you *will.* I make no doubt I could master you easily enough alone, but I'm not fond of

over-exerting myself; so if I blow this little whistle my pal will be up in a hurry to see what's wanted. But," the officer continued, with a cunning gleam in his eyes, which looked straight into those of his captive, "can you tell me before we go, what act of Parliament *made Jakey Jackson over into Dr. Grigg?*"

The ex-keeper gave him one frightened, despairing look, uttered a groan, and then allowed himself to be led away without another word or act of resistance.

"Because," continued the officer, in his off-hand way, as they went down stairs, "I've been looking for that first-named individual for the past five years to settle a little matter down in London for house-breaking and robbery, and for an assault upon a defenseless woman. Eh? did you ever hear of such a case?"

And while Dr. Grigg, alias Jakey Jackson, was driven away to prison to await his trial, and realize something of what his victim had suffered before him, Howard Montgomery was conveyed to a first-class hotel, where, two hours later, clad as became his means and position, he sat down to a repast fit for a king, which his friends had ordered to be served in a private room immediately upon their return from their mission.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE RETURN TO NEW YORK.

GEORGE ANTHONY said truly when he told Howard that he had been greatly shocked and excited upon discovering his friend to be an inmate of that institution for insane paupers.

After leaving him he had hurried Dr. Forsyth as quickly as possible from the place, and once in their carriage he had sunk into his seat, looking as if he had seen a ghost.

"What ails you?" Dr. Forsyth asked him, while he regarded his pale, shocked face with surprise.

"My God, Forsyth, you could knock me down with a feather; that so-called 'madman' whom we have just left is one of my dearest friends."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed his friend in astonishment.

"Just what I tell you; and besides all this, he is no more mad than you or I."

The great English physician could scarcely credit what he heard.

"Impossible!" he ejaculated. "Is he an American?"

"Yes, a wealthy American gentleman. We were at college together for three years—at Yale, in New Haven, Conn.—and a finer fellow never drew breath. The last I heard of him was that he had married and started on a European tour with his wife. And I tell you, seeing him in that vile den to-day has given me a turn that I find it hard to get over."

"I should imagine so; are you sure of your man?"

"As sure as I am of my own identity, and he recognized me instantly."

"Where is his wife?"

"I do not know—he did not mention her; he had only time for a few words, for he said that if Grigg should suspect that he was recognized, his chance for deliverance would be lost," Dr. Anthony returned, and then went on to relate what Howard had told him regarding the strange circumstances which had brought him to such a strait.

"It is the strangest story that I ever heard in my life," Dr. Forsyth said, "and that rascal shall suffer to the extent of the law for the part he has played in it. But why on earth did you not denounce him then and there? We could have easily liberated your friend on the spot."

"Montgomery thought it would be better for me to return to the city and swear out a warrant against the keeper. If we had attempted to act without authority we might have got ourselves into trouble, and also given the wretch an opportunity to escape."

"That is true; your friend's advice is good," returned his companion, "and now we will put this matter through and he shall be liberated before the sun goes down, while that wretched keeper shall sleep in a dungeon."

Upon reaching the city they went immediately to the proper authorities, made their statement, gave bonds for Howard, testifying to their conviction that he was a perfectly sane man, and secured a warrant for the arrest of Grigg upon the charges of theft and perjury, and also for the abuse of his power in cruelly torturing those under his care.

Dr. Forsyth, being an Englishman and a gentleman of influence, and also knowing all the ins and outs of the laws of his country, made quick work of the matter, and four hours from the time of their first visit to the asylum, the two physicians, accompanied by an officer, were back again to release Howard and arrest the villainous keeper.

While *Dr.* Grigg, alias Jakey Jackson, was raving and swearing in a gloomy prison over the abrupt and unhappy termination of his career, Howard sat with his friends in a luxurious parlor of a first-class hotel, and told his thrilling experience of the last three years.

"It is the strangest tale that I ever listened to," Dr. Forsyth said, when he had concluded; "and," he added, his eyes flashing with indignation, "the cruelties and abuse which have been perpetrated in that asylum are a blot upon and a disgrace to my country. I shall bestir myself in the matter immediately."

And he did most effectually.

A year later he had the satisfaction of knowing that those unfortunate beings in that pauper institution were made as comfortable as it was possible for them to be in their lamentable condition.

The buildings were thoroughly renovated, improvements in ventilation and drainage made, the inmates comfortably clothed and fed, and kindly treated by the large-hearted, whole-souled man whom the philanthropic doctor himself had recommended for the position.

"I do not see how you have ever lived through it all without becoming in truth a lunatic. Have you never had the least opportunity to escape?" said Dr. Anthony, regarding his friend with something of wonder.

"Never. For two years, or ever since I recovered my reason, I have been constantly on the alert; but I have been confined and watched night and day. Several times I have appealed to visitors, but they were always accompanied by Grigg, who told them that it was a trick of mine to pretend I was all right; consequently they gave no heed to me. Two or three times I have been upon the point of knocking the wretch down with my chair, but he was too quick for me, and being more powerful than I, I could accomplish nothing in a struggle with him."

"You gave him a fine thrashing to-day, however," returned Dr. Anthony, with a laugh.

"Yes," Howard answered, his eyes flashing with excitement at the remembrance. "Seeing you, and feeling that you would never rest until you had accomplished my liberation, lent me both courage and strength. I took him entirely unawares, tripped him, and getting possession of his whip, the coward was at my mercy, and I think I *did* give him something to make him remember me for some time to come."

"And you have heard nothing from your wife and child? You have known nothing of them all this time?" Dr. Forsyth asked compassionately.

"No, sir, nothing," Howard answered, huskily and with a trembling lip.

"Where do you suppose they are?" asked his friend.

"If they are—living," he said with an effort, "I presume they are in New York with my sister, Mrs. Langley. I think it would be natural for Mrs. Montgomery to go direct to her upon her return; and, of course, under the circumstances, she would do everything that she could for her in her trouble."

He really believed that Helen would relent, and forget all her bitterness and opposition to his marriage, when she should learn of his mysterious disappearance, and that her woman's heart would go out to Cecile with sisterly sympathy and kindness.

"I presume, however," he muttered a moment after, looking exceedingly grave, "that they have all given me up as dead. They would be likely to feel that nothing but death would keep me from them."

George Anthony started up at this, saying with animation:

"Give me your sister's address, Montgomery, and I will go immediately and cable to her that you are safe, well, and will shortly return. They shall remain in suspense no longer."

Howard arose, went to a desk that was in the room, and himself wrote the message which we have already seen in the hand of Mrs. Langley, and which so greatly disturbed her.

That same evening he wrote long letters to both his wife and sister, giving them something of the history of the three weary years during which he had been separated from them, and, as we have seen, inclosing the letter to his wife in the one which he had sent to Mrs. Langley.

But, alas, for poor Cecile, she never received that precious missive, and we know that Helen herself did not get either cablegram or letters until long after they had been sent.

Four weeks after Howard's liberation the so-called Dr. Grigg was brought to trial, and it is almost needless to state that it did not take a very lengthy hearing to convict him of the charges brought against him.

Dr. Anthony, although somewhat anxious to return to this country, remained to identify his friend, and to testify to his irreproachable character as a citizen of the United States.

His innocence of the alleged crime for which he had been so unjustly sentenced three years before was proved beyond a doubt; for, besides the doctor's testimony, and the fact that Howard's wallet had been found upon the person of Grigg, *alias* Jakey Jackson, in the presence of three witnesses, his letter of credit had also been discovered among his private papers.

The wretch had not dared to make use of it in any way, and, for some reason, had neglected to destroy it. Thus it not only proved very important as documentary evidence, but relieved Howard from all unpleasantness regarding financial affairs.

The ex-keeper was convicted of several crimes, and sentenced to transportation for life, and Howard Montgomery, his innocent victim, went out a free man once more.

Meantime he was extremely anxious, because he had not heard one word in reply to the letters he had sent home.

"Surely they must have received them," he said, while talking the matter over with his friend, and his face was almost convulsed with pain, "and there has been ample time for a reply. Can anything have happened to them? Are they all sick, or—*dead?*" and he shuddered as this dreadful possibility flashed through his mind.

"Don't think of anything so distressing as that," George Anthony returned, while his great heart ached for him.

"A terrible fear haunts me," Howard answered, wearily; "but surely it seems as if I have suffered enough without being still further afflicted;" and it seemed to his tortured heart as if the years which he had spent in

his vile prison had not been half so long as the days which now dragged so heavily by.

"Montgomery, man, you will work yourself into a nervous fever if you do not exercise more patience and self-control," Dr. Anthony said again and again, as he walked the floor by day, and tossed sleeplessly upon his bed by night, and he was really growing to feel alarmed at his condition.

"I know it," he returned, with a wan smile, "but this suspense is simply unbearable; just think—I have been separated from my wife and child, and in utter ignorance of all pertaining to them, for three long years. I do not know whether they are living or dead; I have written several times; no word comes to tell me aught concerning them, and I am driven wild with doubt and fear."

"I know it is hard on you, old fellow, and it is very strange that you have heard nothing; but I fear you are tormenting yourself unnecessarily—it is possible that your sister has changed her place of residence, and your letters have not reached her," his friend said, trying to suggest something to calm his anxious fears.

"That may be true!" Howard cried, grasping eagerly at the idea. "I wish you had thought of it before, and I would have written to my lawyer to ascertain her whereabouts for me; but it is too late now, for to-morrow we sail." He, however, had a more comfortable voyage for this happy thought.

Six weeks from the day of his release from his wretched prison and the power of his tormentor Howard Montgomery landed in New York.

He was worn and haggard, for the voyage had, at best, been almost unendurable, and a thousand fears had beset him all the way.

He was the first to spring ashore when the steamer touched her pier, and without waiting to take leave of his friend, or giving a thought to anything save his dear ones, he sprang into the first carriage that he could find, and was driven with all possible speed to No.— Fifth Avenue.

He mounted the marble steps two at a time, and rang the bell, for one glance at the door-plate told him that the name of Langley was still there.

"Is Mrs. Langley at home?" he questioned tremblingly of the waiter—a strange one—who opened the door.

"Yes, Mrs. Langley was at home," he said, wondering if he was some relative of the colonel's to be thus excited and overcome.

"Is Mrs. Montgomery here?" was the next eager query. The waiter stared.

He had never even heard of Mrs. Montgomery.

"No," he replied, "he did not think the lady was there." Howard's heart sank.

"Tell Mrs. Langley that her brother has arrived, and wishes to see her immediately," and with a face like marble, the perspiration, like great drops of dew, standing upon it, he pushed by the man and went directly to Mrs. Langley's parlor, never once thinking that he had come like one raised from the dead, into that house of death; never dreaming that that woman upstairs, in the solitude of her own chamber, had spent the whole night plotting for the ruin of his idolized wife, and for the blighting of his every earthly hope.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE HUSBAND'S DESPAIR.

IT MAY be presumed that when Howard sent up word to his sister that he was waiting to see her, it did not tend to quiet her excited nerves.

"My brother come!" she cried, shrilly, when the servant delivered the message.

For a moment a deadly faintness seized her, and she sank back upon the pillows from which she had started at the information.

But she rallied almost immediately.

It was no time to give way to weakness or fear, for she had a desperate purpose to carry out, and she would need all her strength and all her will-power to sustain her through it.

"Go down," she said to the maid, "and tell him that I will be with him directly."

For a moment after the girl closed the door she was ghastly, and her teeth chattered nervously.

She sat up in bed and pressed her hands hard against her temples, looking wildly about, as if she longed to escape the trying ordeal before her.

"*What* shall I do!" she cried, excitedly. "Howard is all that I have left now. I hate *her*—the child is dead. If I could only keep him all to myself—if I could only manage so that he would never find *her!* I *will* do it."

And murmuring these disconnected sentences, while her cunning brain was teeming with schemes to accomplish her evil purpose, she hastily dressed herself, and then descended to meet and welcome the wanderer home.

As soon as she opened the door of the parlor, where

he was impatiently pacing back and forth, she sprang forward, with a glad cry, and threw herself into his arms. She saw how pale and worn he was; she saw that his once raven locks were thickly sprinkled with silver, and wondered what had caused the sad change in him. She saw that his eyes were glowing with eager inquiry and repressed excitement, and knew that it was not of her that he was thinking, or of his long separation from her, but of his wife and little one, and she resolved to hold those dreaded questions trembling upon his lips at bay as long as possible.

She wound her arms about his neck; she called him by all the fond names which she was accustomed to use during the days of their childhood, and then apparently overcome by her emotion at this unexpected meeting, she burst into tears, and wept so violently that she could not have answered any questions if he had asked them.

"Oh, Howard!" she said, after awhile, between her sobs, "to think that you should come just at this time when I need you most. William died two days ago—was thrown from his carriage nearly a fortnight since, and knew nothing afterward."

A fresh burst of weeping here drowned even Howard's expression of dismay and surprise.

"I was in California," she resumed, at length, "visiting Fanny Scherman, and they telegraphed for me; but I did not get here in season to see him before he died."

"Then you did not get my letters?" Howard began, but she interrupted him.

"No, I only found them yesterday. William was away all the time I was gone, and no one knew my address. Oh, dear! I am nearly distracted with all this trouble and excitement;" and another shower followed this assertion.

Howard's patience was well-nigh exhausted, but while she was in that state he could do nothing but try to soothe her.

He knew, of course, that if his sister had but just received his letters, Cecile was still in the dark concerning

his fate; was, perhaps, believing him dead, and still mourning for him.

"Helen," he said, at length, when he could bear her weeping no longer, "where is Cecile?"

"But she seemed to be even more greatly distressed than before at this question.

Helen Langley had never wept so much in her life, and now she was only seeking to gain time. Bad as she was at heart, she instinctively recoiled from carrying out the plot which she had been maturing ever since receiving her brother's letters.

"Oh, Howard! my poor brother! how *can* I tell you? It seems as if all our trouble comes at once," she sobbed.

Howard instantly sat erect and put her away from him. His face was as white as chalk, and his chest rose and fell with deep, heavily-drawn breaths.

"What do you mean?" he cried, hoarsely, while there was a rushing sound in his ears, and it seemed as if hammers were beating upon his temples.

But she was trembling violently, her whole body was swayed with sobs, and she appeared unable to tell him.

He laid hold of her wrists, and drew her hands away from her face.

"Helen, have you no mercy upon me?" he said sternly; "tell me at once, and do not keep me in this torturing suspense."

"Can you bear it, Howard?" Mrs. Langley asked, lifting her eyes piteously to his face.

"I *cannot* bear to wait; *tell* me where my wife is," and his voice was strained and hoarse.

She threw her arms again about his neck, and hid her face upon his shoulder, because she could not meet his anguished eyes while she told her horrible tale.

"Howard," she said, sadly, "she can be your wife no longer; she belongs to another now."

He threw her from him with a despairing cry—a cry that rang in her ears long afterward.

"You cannot mean it," he said, with ashen lips. "Cecile the wife of another?"

She would never have known the voice, it was so unnatural and full of misery, while his face was perfectly frightful to look upon, and she began to fear that she was carrying things too far; but it was too late to retreat now.

And for Howard Montgomery, life seemed like a bitter mockery to him now. With all his anxiety and fear regarding his dear ones, he had never thought of anything like this.

Helen crept close to him again, but he could not bear her to touch him—he recoiled from her proffered sympathy.

"Of course," she returned, "she cannot legally be the wife of another as long as you are alive and have returned; but—but—she believed you were dead, and—she is living with a Dr. Mortimer, in San Francisco—some one whom she met, I believe, when she returned from Europe, and who was very kind to her;" and the wicked woman told this cruel falsehood with every appearance of reluctance and sorrow at having such dreadful tidings to reveal.

The wretched man bowed his head upon the arm of the sofa, and his whole frame shook with the agony which he could not control, while his sister sat by and witnessed it without a twinge of remorse for the suffering she was causing.

If she could but make him believe this, and file a petition for a divorce, she would be amply revenged upon Cecile for her defiance in the past.

"How long is it since—since this thing happened?" Howard at length asked.

"It is only about five or six weeks since she went to San Francisco, but I do not know how long she has been contemplating the step."

"You do not know, Helen? *Why* don't you know?" her brother demanded, regarding her searchingly.

"Because she has never confided to me any of her plans," she answered, proudly, and with rising color.

"Have you not been interested in Cecile since she returned?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," Mrs. Langley said glibly, "but she never forgave me for opposing your marriage with her, and she scorned every offer which I made after her return. I wanted to take the baby——"

"My baby—what of her?" Howard interrupted suddenly.

In his agony, caused by what he had heard regarding his wife, he had almost lost sight of the fact of his child's existence.

"Howard—she is—dead."

He put out his hand as if to ward off a blow, and she recoiled as if he had struck her as she saw his face.

It was horrible to sit there and witness his suffering, but she had determined upon her plan of action, and she would not swerve from it; while, although she did not really *know* that Daisy was not living, she really believed that she must be dead and buried long before this.

They had told her that she was dying when she went to inquire, and, of course, she thought it would be impossible for her to recover from a relapse of that dread disease.

It was almost more than mortal man could bear to sit there and have all his hopes thus shattered.

Cecile gone—won by another—lost to him forever; his child—that beautiful, blue-eyed, sunny-haired darling—dead! and after the exile and suffering of the past three years to return and find himself shorn of all that made life worth the living! Surely no one had ever had such a cup of misery to drink before.

With his hand pressed hard over his eyes, and his heart growing numb within his bosom, he sat still and tried to face it—to realize just what was before him.

"Helen," he said, after awhile, "I cannot talk—I can scarcely think, and I cannot bear much more; but tell me in as few words as possible all that has occurred to Cecile since she returned—or, at least, all that you know about her."

And the cunning tale which she wove for his tingling ears would have done credit to the most extravagant romancer of the age.

She represented that as soon as she had learned of her return she had an interview with her, offering to befriend her in any way that she could; but all her overtures had been indignantly refused, and Cecile had treated her with a haughtiness and overbearance that was intolerable.

"That is not at all like Cecile," Howard said, with a troubled look.

"But I tell you she has never forgiven me for not being present at your marriage, and for my opposition to it," reiterated Mrs. Langley. "I offered her money when I found she was in trouble——"

"*You offered her money!*" interrupted Howard in astonishment. "There was plenty of money for her without the necessity of borrowing from any one."

"But Mr. Griswold, your lawyer, died just about the time of her return, and as his affairs were in such a complicated condition, Cecile could get nothing," Mrs. Langley explained with some uneasiness.

"Mr. Griswold dead!" her brother cried.

Was everybody dying? Was this good man, one of his best friends, gone too? Was he to lose everything that he prized out of his life?

"Yes," Helen returned; "he died quite suddenly—was ill only a few days; and then the colonel, thinking we *must* hear from you before long, took the management of your business interests. Of course, while all this was happening Cecile needed money, but, as I told you, she indignantly rejected all my advances. She was very haughty and independent, and went away and hid herself from us."

"You should have settled a handsome income upon her," her brother said, sternly.

It was entirely unlike his wife to conduct herself in any such manner as his sister represented, and he could not understand it at all.

"How could we do that, Howard, when we did not know where she was?" Helen asked innocently.

"But what supported her? She had no money of any consequence when we left England—not even enough to pay her passage," he said, greatly disturbed.

"I don't *know* what supported her," Helen answered with suspicious emphasis; "but she *told* me that this Dr. Mortimer, who was so kind to her during the voyage, lent her money to pay her passage."

"She *told* you this," and then refused to take what you offered her to cancel her obligations to that man!" Howard Montgomery said, astonished.

"Helen," he said, a moment later, "there is something about all this that I do not understand. What you have told me is entirely at variance with Cecile's character. Are you sure you are keeping nothing back?"

"What should I keep back?" she questioned. "I afterward discovered by accident where she lived, and, supposing her to be in reduced circumstances, and feeling that it was no way for *your* child to live, I went to her and offered to take Daisy, and do for her exactly as if she were my own. She insultingly scorned my offer, as before, and *said* she was supporting herself and did not need any assistance from me. She was living in a pretty way; her house was a perfect little bower of beauty; and since I learned that she had gone to San Francisco to live with this doctor, I have come to the conclusion that *he* must have taken care of her all along."

Howard covered his face again and groaned.

Could it be possible, he asked himself, that her heart could have been so easily won from him?—that this strange doctor, whoever he might be, had acquired such an influence over her that she would consent to place herself under such obligations to him?

He remembered how she had once said to him, "There is nothing in the world I could not bear better than to lose you or your love."

Had she so soon forgotten him and his devotion to her? Was it possible that he could have been so mistaken in her character? he asked himself, while a strange bitterness began to creep into his heart against her.

He had fondly believed that she could never change—

that had she watched him sicken and die, and followed him to his last resting-place, her heart never would have swerved in its allegiance to him, and that she would have turned a deaf ear to every entreaty from another, and gone to her grave alone, loving only him.

But now, according to his sister's story, she had clung to the first stranger who had admired and been attentive to her; she had laid herself under heavy obligations to him—obligations which made his face burn with indignation, and his lips to curl with scorn; and finally, without positively knowing what her husband's fate had been, she had given herself into this man's keeping and gone away with him.

He did not dream that she could support herself—that her gentle, dependent nature could rise to meet and overcome the storm of fate alone; and so, blinded by disappointment and misery, he was forced to accept his sister's story as truth.

"Have you never seen her since you went to propose to adopt Daisy?" he asked.

"Not until I met her at the house of a friend in San Francisco," Mrs. Langley returned, her face flushing hotly at the remembrance of that last interview. "She was fully as overbearing as she had been before, and I assure you the meeting was anything but a pleasant one."

"Have you ever renewed your offer to give her an income from my property?" Howard questioned.

"Yes, once; but she said she was happy to tell me that she had sufficient for all her needs—that even if she never had one dollar of your fortune, Daisy would have no mean dowry when she reached her majority."

Again Howard groaned; he could not fail to believe now that Cecile had been provided for in some other way than by her own efforts. She was a delicate, fragile girl who had never been taught to labor or depend upon herself at all—how could she, then, go forth into the world alone, and battle for her living and win a competence?

Still he could not quite understand why she should

refuse to accept what rightfully belonged to her of his property, unless it was from a sense of guilt, and a reluctance to use his money when her heart had turned to another.

"When—when were they—married?" he asked, a shiver coming over him.

"I don't know. I do not even know that they *are* married at all," Helen Langley began, maliciously; but he interrupted her almost fiercely.

"Don't *dare* to insinuate anything of that kind!" he said. "She was as pure as an angel, and if she has been won by another, she has given herself away honorably, believing that I am dead."

"Yes, she told me she thought you were dead as soon as she returned; but whether she is married to him or not, I saw their shadows upon one of the curtains of their room, as I was passing one evening the house where they board."

Howard made a gesture of repugnance. He could not bear to have her go thus immediately into details; it tortured him.

"And my Daisy—when did she die?" he asked, with a sob of pain.

"About that time; she was attacked with diphtheria in its worst form. I was very anxious, of course, and went every day to inquire about her—she was *your* child, and I felt that I had a perfect right to do so. The last time I went they told me she was dying, and—that was poor Daisy's last night on earth," the false-hearted woman concluded, with every appearance of grief.

"Did you see her after—after it was all over?"

"No; I received a telegram, that very evening, saying that the colonel had been fatally injured, and I was obliged to come away immediately. Oh, Howard," she continued, going nearer to him and leaning against him, "I know all this is dreadful to you—all that you had has been taken from you; and I, too, am now left alone; we have only one another now, and we must try to comfort and live for each other in the future."

He could not bear one word of sympathy.

A cry of despair burst from him. He put her quickly away, arose and left the room without a word.

She heard him go upstairs to the chamber that he used to occupy whenever he was her guest, and shut and lock the door, and she knew that if his heart was broken, she alone had done it; but there was no sorrow, no regret in her heart for the ruin which she was working.

She arose wearily from the sofa where they had been sitting; the excitement and sight of his misery had well-nigh exhausted her also.

"Well, that ordeal is over at last, and I have only anticipated events a little, after all. Any one could see that that handsome doctor worshiped her; and with Daisy dead, it is easy to see that he will offer himself, and Cecile, worn out with trouble and watching, will be only too glad to find somebody to take care of her. If I can only make Howard believe it, and persuade him to get a divorce, I shall be able to keep my brother to myself, and be amply revenged upon *her*. How she would rave and tear those golden locks if she found, all too late, that Howard had returned alive and well!"

And with these malicious thoughts in her heart Mrs. Langley also sought the solitude of her chamber, to plot still further for the ruin of the woman whom she hated.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"SOMETHING WRONG SOMEWHERE."

THE NEXT few days were dreary enough at the Langley mansion.

Arrangements had to be made for the funeral and burial of Colonel Langley, Mrs. Langley was busily engaged in ordering her mourning, and Howard, left to himself, neither ate nor slept in his wretchedness, and looked more like a ghost than a human being.

News of his return spread like wild-fire through the circle in which he used to move, and his friends—many of them excited by curiosity and some by real friendly feeling—flocked to see him.

But he would admit none of them; the thought of meeting familiar faces and being obliged to talk of his trouble was more than he could bear, and everything jarred upon his sensitive nerves.

Only Dr. Anthony, who insisted upon seeing him, was allowed to come into his presence, and the sight of even his sympathetic face nearly drove him frantic.

"My life is a failure—it is ruined, and I wish you'd give me something to put an end to my misery!" he said, one day, as he wrung the young doctor's hand until he nearly cried out with pain.

"Have I not suffered enough?" he continued; "have I not borne all that human nature could be expected to bear during the last three years, without the addition of this crushing, *damning* burden?"

He had been telling his friend the story that his sister had related to him, and he was so excited and unstrung that he hardly knew what he was saying.

He forgot during these first hours of his wretchedness those calmly-spoken words of faith that he had uttered

to Cecile when she had told him so long ago of her presentiment of coming trouble; he had said, "'Trials will doubtless come to us in some form or other—I expect them; and if God sends them to us I trust we shall both bear them in the right spirit, for we know whom 'He loveth He chasteneth.'"

But he had never thought that trouble could come in any form so dreadful as this.

"If she were *dead*," he cried, "I could bear it better; but for us both to live and to feel that we can never be anything to each other again will be a living death to me. Oh, to think she could have married another without positive *proof* of my death!—to let another win her love from me when I have idolized her!—when I have trusted and believed that *nothing* could ever make her forget me! I tell you, George, the shock to both love and trust is more than I can bear.

"And my baby—my blue-eyed Daisy—is *dead*!" he went on, speaking like one who was utterly despairing. "Did you ever hear anything like it, Anthony? Did you ever know of any one who was crushed by such an avalanche of woe? Oh, Heaven! I never dreamed that such utter desolation could sweep over the heart of man, and yet live!"

He could, indeed, bear no more, and, bowing his head upon his hands, great sobs shook his frame, and he wept as only a strong nature can weep.

It was well for him that his friend had forced his way to him, and that he had poured out his sorrows to him, for with all that bitterness pent up much longer in his heart he must have gone mad.

Dr. Anthony could find no words of comfort to offer to a grief like this—he could only sit silently by and let it have its course. Consolation of any kind would have seemed but a mockery.

He had been greatly startled and shocked upon hearing Howard's sad story—almost as much so as he had been when he had discovered him to be an inmate of that pauper asylum in the outskirts of Liverpool.

He was not satisfied or convinced, either. He had

seen Cecile's picture—a lovely face on porcelain that Howard always carried, and which, strange to say, had been left to him during his imprisonment, and had been the only gleam of comfort that he had had during those long years of trial—and, looking into those deep blue eyes, so faithfully painted there, he could not bring his heart to believe that she could be so fickle, so forgetful of her love for him, that she would have been lightly won by another, without positive proof of her husband's death.

But the facts seemed to be so plain. Mrs. Langley affirmed that she *knew* her sister-in-law was with this Dr. Mortimer, that she had *seen* them together in their own room, and he felt that things certainly looked badly for Howard's peace of mind for the future.

Several weeks went by and Howard still remained a recluse, and was worn nearly to a skeleton by his constant and rebellious grieving. Mrs. Langley also denied herself to all visitors—seeing no one but this one friend who remained so faithful to her brother, and in whom she was beginning to feel a strange interest herself.

But the monotony of this way of living began to be irksome to her, and she longed for some change. Besides, she began to wish that Howard would arouse himself and look into her husband's affairs, as she naturally felt some curiosity regarding her future finances.

She consulted Dr. Anthony upon the propriety of trying to get Howard to accompany her to some watering-place, hoping this might change the tenor of his thoughts somewhat, and help to build up his shattered system.

"It will be the very best thing that you can do," he had told her; adding, impressively: "Something must be done immediately, for he cannot endure this kind of life much longer;" and then, emboldened by her confidence in him, he ventured to ask her some questions regarding Cecile's second marriage.

The more he thought about the matter the less satisfied he felt. He had a feeling that *something* was wrong *somewhere*, and he had about made up his mind that he should go to San Francisco and sift the whole thing for himself just as soon as he could leave his friend.

But Mrs. Langley painted Cecile as a pretty, simple girl, having no mind or stability of character, and as one wholly unfitted to be the wife of such a man as Howard Montgomery. She spoke freely and frankly of her opposition to their marriage upon those grounds, but said, charitably, that Howard had been so fascinated by her beauty that he would not be influenced. She spoke of her interviews with her after her return, and made her appear so unreasonable and unlovely, so vindictive and unforgiving, on account of her objection to her union with her brother, that the young physician was forced to believe that his friend had, after all, been blinded by love, and worshiped an ideal instead of a real woman.

Helen Langley was very careful not to mention where Cecile's residence had been while she lived in New York, or that Martha, the Scotch girl who had accompanied her from Liverpool, had continued to live with her. She feared they might go there to make inquiries, and thus discover her duplicity.

She, however, kept herself posted, and knew that Cecile had not returned yet, and she hoped to be able to get her brother away from New York; and once away, she meant to stay where there would be no danger of his meeting her if she did return.

"It is a terrible trial for Howard," she said, tearfully, while talking with Dr. Anthony. "If the poor girl really believed he was dead, she supposed she had a right to marry again; but it is very unfortunate, for of course there can be nothing for him to do now but to obtain a divorce from her, and then notify this Dr. Mortimer to have this union legalized."

"Have you mentioned anything of the kind to your brother?" he asked, thinking it somewhat strange that in the midst of her own trials she should have arranged everything so thoughtfully for his future.

Such a thing had not occurred to him before, although he could but acknowledge that it seeemed to be the only proper course for him to pursue under the circumstances.

"I hinted it to him one day," she answered, flushing,

"but he appeared to take no notice of what I said. Do you not think that he ought to take some such steps?"

"I do not know," George Anthony answered, gravely.

Looking at the matter in the light in which she presented it, it seemed as if it would be best; but as he remembered those sweet, innocent eyes, that delicate, clear-cut face, with its marvelous beauty and sensitive mouth, his whole soul revolted at the thought.

"Why don't you go to California and see for yourself just how matters are, before you take any decided steps toward——"

"Toward what?" Howard demanded, sharply; and Dr. Anthony regretted having spoken in the way he had.

"Toward—I mean against you wife."

"Against her! How?"

"Your sister said something about obtaining a divorce," he returned, desperately, seeing that he had committed himself beyond retreat.

"I wish Helen would attend to her own affairs and let me alone."

"I beg your pardon, Montgomery," George Anthony interrupted, flushing scarlet. "*I* should have let you alone. *I* should not have meddled with this delicate matter; but I am worried to death about you. You will really become a subject for a lunatic asylum if you don't do something to set you mind at rest pretty soon."

"Set my mind, at rest!" Howard said, with a bitter smile. "Do you suppose that will ever be in this world? But you need not apologize for your interest in me. I know it is genuine, and you have proved yourself a good friend to me. But as for 'going to California to see for myself,' do you think I could bear to meet *her* as the wife of another? I tell you it would kill me outright."

He arose and paced the floor with wild, uneven steps, staggering almost like a drunken man in his excitement at the thought.

"You say I shall be crazy," he went on, "if I remain this way long. I know it, but I sometimes think that

would be better than the existence I now lead. I should not perhaps realize my misery so keenly. What shall I do, Anthony?" he cried, his voice rising to a wail, like the wind in a tempest. "Every hour that I live only serves to make me more wretched. I suppose some would tell me to go and claim my wife—that she is mine in the sight of the law—that she could be no other man's wife while I live, and I could compel her to return to me if I chose. I know all this, but every instinct within me revolts from such a proceeding. If she has voluntarily given herself to another, she could never be the same to me again; yet I long for her with a yearning that is consuming my very life. No, I shall do nothing. I shall never even obtain a divorce. I will live and die faithful to my vows to her, whatever she may have done. If my baby had lived, perhaps I might have thought differently, for I should have wanted her. But it is better as it is," he added, with a sigh that was almost a sob; "her mother could not have borne to part with her, and there would have been more trouble for us on that account. Was there ever a life so strangely cursed as mine, Anthony?" he asked, in conclusion.

"I do not believe there ever was," he answered, with a troubled face.

"What shall I do—where shall I go to bury my misery? Prescribe something if you can for me; a Lethe—oblivion—*anything* to ease this gnawing, devouring pain," Howard pleaded, almost helplessly, for he was fast losing strength to endure.

And George Anthony, looking at him with pitying, tearful eyes, said:

"Howard, in all my life I have never felt so utterly powerless before a human being as I do before you. Your trouble is one which only God can cure."

"God!" the unhappy man repeated, a blank look stealing over his face, and speaking in a startled tone; "I believe that I have actually forgotten that there is a God!"

"Remember, my friend, that He has said: 'When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee;

and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.'"

George Anthony repeated this in a gentle, reverent voice, and Howard Montgomery bowed his head in humility and contrition before the mild reproof.

He had, indeed, forgotten that there was One above who ruled all things; he had forgotten everything save his own trouble and pain.

He had been rebelling against his Father, smiting back the hand that was chastening him, perhaps for his own good, and he was stricken with remorse for his lack of faith and trust.

George Anthony, seeing that he had stirred better thoughts within him, arose and went quietly out, leaving him alone with One whose healing power was far greater than that of any earthly comforter.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ONLY A BABY'S SHOE!

"GO TO California and see for yourself."

The idea was utterly repulsive to Howard, and if any one save George Anthony—his sister, even—had proposed such a thing to him, he would have indignantly rejected it on the spot.

But the words haunted him continually; night and day they were constantly ringing in his ears. Go where he would, employ himself as he would in reading, writing, sleeping or waking, it was always the same—"Go to California and see for yourself."

A spirit of fierce antagonism took possession of him; he became angry, irritable and nervous in consequence of it.

"I *will* not go," he reiterated again and again; and when at length his sister proposed a trip to Saratoga he readily acceded to it, hoping thus amid new scenes to rid himself of that haunting thought, and so to Saratoga they went.

Three days he remained there, and was even more restless than before; he could interest himself in nothing—he could enjoy nothing, while the gay company by which he was surrounded rasped and annoyed him excessively. Every day he became more wan and haggard, and dejected, until Mrs. Langley grew alarmed for his health, and to fear that perhaps her wretched plotting might result in her brother's death.

During the afternoon of the third day of their sojourn at the Springs he sought her and startled her with the declaration:

"Helen, I am going back to New York."

"What for?" she demanded, greatly disturbed.

"Because this life of inaction will kill me quicker than anything else," he answered desperately. "I must have something to do. I am going to try what effect *work* will have. I am going into business of some kind."

"You are wild to think of such a thing, Howard, at this season of the year of all times, and in your present state of health," she replied, while a hundred possibilities flashed through her mind.

Cecile was liable to return at any time; she knew that she must have left for San Francisco very suddenly; consequently her business—if business she really had—must be in an unsettled condition, and if she came back to New York she was likely to meet her husband.

Martha, too, might meet him on the street, recognize him, and then all plans would be destroyed, and she herself brought to grief and shame.

"It matters little about my health—it matters little about the season," he said, moodily; "employment of some kind I must have or I shall indeed be crazy. At all events I shall return to New York to-night."

"What shall *I* do here, alone?" Mrs. Langley asked with an injured air.

"You have been here alone many times before, and I am no company for any one now, as you very well know. I do not think you will suffer for society, Helen," he replied, with something of sarcasm in his tone.

She flushed.

"How will you live? where will you stay?" she asked, anxiously.

"I shall manage well enough—do not worry about me. I shall take a room down-town somewhere near my office, and get my meals out."

"I think I ought to return with you, and see that you take proper care of yourself," Mrs. Langley said, thoughtfully.

"I do *not*, Helen," Howard returned, decidedly; "my object is to get away from everybody and everything that reminds me of the past; perhaps if I plunge into work

I may be able to stop this dreadful thinking. I shall take hold of your affairs at once, for they ought to be settled immediately now. No, stay where you are until you are ready to go home, then drop me a line and I will have the house put in order for you."

She saw it would be of no use to try to dissuade him from his purpose, and as she could not endure the thought of going back to the seclusion of her own home, she let him have his own way without more ado.

And so he returned to New York that night, took an office in a busy portion of the city, and imagined that he was going to forget himself in work.

But it was of no use—he could settle himself to nothing, even though he discovered the startling fact that Colonel Langley had been hopelessly involved at the time of his death, and that his sister's affairs were in a very bad condition. There was no peace for him, while it seemed as if a thousand demons were continually shouting at him: "Go to California and see for yourself."

Driven nearly beside himself, he said at last:

"I'll go; it can do no harm, and she need never know that I have been there. I will satisfy myself that everything is just as Helen has said, and then that will settle the matter. If *she* is happy amid her new surroundings I could never do anything to trouble her." So, dropping everything and telling nobody of his intention, he left one dark, rainy evening for San Francisco.

It was now about the first of September, and some two months since Helen Langley had been summoned home to her dying husband, and there had been great changes in Mrs. Lawson's pleasant household during that time.

It was night when Howard arrived in the great city of the far West, and he was so utterly worn out with the long, tedious journey, that he was glad to seek his bed immediately, where he dropped at once into a heavy slumber, which lasted until late the next morning. Then, in a fever of impatience—for was he not breathing the same air with his beloved?—he made a hasty breakfast, called for a directory and looked up the name

of Dr. Mortimer. He readily found the street and number of his office, also where he resided, made a note of them, and then wandered forth upon a tour of investigation.

Arriving at the physician's office, he rang the bell. He had determined to make him a call, ask him to make an examination of his physical condition, and *measure* the man who had robbed him of his darling, to ascertain if he was worthy of the prize he had won. He surely looked as if he needed medical advice, for he was worn almost to a shadow; his face was as devoid of color as marble, and the excitement and exertion of the morning had made him tremble and almost breathless. There was no answer, however, to his ring, and the office seemed deserted. Three times he pulled at the bell with the same result; then there was the sound of a sash being raised, and a tangled head was thrust out of a window above him.

"What do you want?" the voice of a woman asked, in no amiable tone.

"To see Dr. Mortimer," Howard answered.

"*Dr. Mortimer is dead!*" was the startling reply, and the window went down with a bang.

"Dead!" Howard's white lips repeated mechanically.

For a moment it seemed as if he had been shot through the heart, it gave such a violent bound in his bosom, and it was some time before he could command himself or gain strength sufficient to move away from the place.

Dead! and Cecile—where was she?

Was she left desolate again, to fight the battle of life by herself—friendless and alone in a strange portion of the country?

A feeling of tender pity took possession of him.

"Poor child!" he murmured; "hers had been a sad, a cruel life during the last three years.

"Shall I go to her?" he asked himself, with a wildly throbbing heart. "Would it cause her more of pain than joy to see me now? And if I do, what *relation am I willing to assume toward her?*"

They were hard questions to ask—they were harder to answer, and for a time he was too bewildered and excited to know what course to pursue.

At last he decided to go to the physician's residence, make some inquiries regarding his death, and trust to circumstances for the rest.

Arriving at Mrs. Lawson's house, he asked to see that lady.

"Missis not at home, sah," said the colored boy who answered the ring.

Then, seeing Howard's perplexed look, he added, communicatively:

"She hab gone into the country, sah, for a month—she done gone worn out wid de care and trouble. Nobody but dis chile and de housekeeper here now."

"Can you tell me anything about the physician who died here recently?" Howard asked, anxious to know something of the particulars, and hoping thus to learn where Cecile was.

"No, sah, not much," returned the darkey. "I d'no berry much 'bout Massa Mortimer, 'cept he right down good man—ebry body lub and 'spect him. But dis darkey only came a day or two 'fore he died."

"Is the housekeeper in—can I see her?" Howard inquired.

He did not like to appear too curious before a servant like this.

"No, sah; she hab gone to market," was the discouraging reply.

"How long is it since Dr. Mortimer died?" and he slipped a piece of silver into the boy's hand as he put the question.

"Most a week—he was buried three days ago, sah, said the darkey, with an appreciative grin, as he received the money.

"And—and his family—his friends—where are they?"

He could not endure it; he must know something of Cecile, although the words almost choked him as he uttered them.

"Lor, sah! the poh man hadn't any friends, 'cept his

brodder and de beautiful lady, who left de same day ob de funeral."

The beautiful lady!

That must be Cecile, and she had probably gone home with the doctor's brother for the present.

Howard put his hand to his head in a bewildered way, while an expression of pain swept over his face.

There was an uncontrollable longing in his heart to look just once more upon her face, and he was bitterly disappointed; he did not realize until that moment how much he had hoped to see her, even though he had not intended to seek her.

"Where did they go?" he asked, trying to steady his shaking voice and lips.

"Do no, sah; dis nigger didn't hear 'em say," the boy returned, with a glance of pity into the white, pained face before him.

That bright piece of money had won his heart, and his sympathies were aroused for this friend of the dead man's—as he believed him to be—who had come too late.

"Massa a friend ob de doctor's, and he hab come too late," he said, "but p'raps he would like to take a look into Massa Mortimer's rooms—dey just as he left 'em."

Being alone in the house at that moment he was emboldened to be obliging.

Howard seized upon the proposition eagerly.

Of course he was the friend of any one who had been kind to Cecile.

"Yes, I am a friend, and I have come too late, it seems. I *should* like to look into his rooms," he said, huskily.

He grew almost blind as he stepped into the hall and thought he was in the house—that he should see the very rooms—that his darling had occupied last.

The servant led the way upstairs, Howard following, and opened the door of the parlor which Cecile had occupied during her sojourn in San Francisco; and as the unhappy husband entered he felt almost as if he was standing in the presence of death, everything was so still, the light so subdued, and the air so heavy.

He sat down in a chair, for he was so weak that he could not stand; his heart was beating like a sledge-hammer in his bosom, his ears rang with a sound like that of roaring waters, and if he could have laid down and died there also, where her feet had trod, he would have breathed out his life without a regret.

He was so weary with his pain, and he knew that Cecile, having been the wife of another, could never be the same to him again.

The bell rang while he sat there, and the kind-hearted darkey, with a pitying glance at the suffering man and a hasty "Beg pardon, sah," disappeared to answer it. Left alone, Howard looked curiously around the room.

It was handsomely, even luxuriously furnished, and many little tasteful adornments still remained to testify of Cecile's presence there.

There were several fine pictures upon the walls, a rare statue or two, and a number of vases and ornaments.

Howard staggered to his feet, and moved about mechanically to look at them; but he was never able afterward to recall the subject of a single picture, his mind was so filled with Cecile and with his own misery.

He was treading the same carpet that her feet had pressed; he was breathing the same air that she had breathed; he had sat upon the same chair, and his eyes rested upon the same objects; but there was no comfort in it; it only made him feel more keenly what he had lost.

He peeped in at the bedroom door, but the blinds were closed, and the room wore a gloomy aspect that made him shiver.

Here, doubtless, the doctor had died, and here, too, in all probability, his child had breathed her last.

He retreated, and shut the door again with a groan of pain.

Suddenly, as he was passing the mantel, his eye was transfixed by an object that made him cry out again.

It was a baby's shoe!—a little blue kid shoe, worn at the heel and toe, but still retaining the shape of the tiny foot that had worn it.

He caught it to his breast with an almost frantic gesture.

"It is mine!" he whispered, hoarsely. "It *is* mine," he repeated, as if contending with some one for the possession of it.

It was pitiful to hear the hard, dry sobs which shook the strong man through and through as he pressed that little shoe to his lips, and felt as if his heart would burst in twain.

He knew that it had belonged to his Daisy—to his darling, who was dead, and henceforth it would be the most precious thing in the world to him, while it thrilled him with such tender love, yet such deep despair, that he wondered if any one in the whole world had ever been so utterly wretched as he was at that moment.

There was no other article in either room to tell him that his wife and child had ever been there, and yet the very atmosphere seemed pervaded by their presence.

He stood like one in a trance, his head bowed, his hands reverently clasping that tiny shoe, until he heard steps on the stairs, and knew that the servant was returning, and that he must go.

Then hastily thrusting the little treasure that he had found into his bosom, he sat down again and tried to compose himself.

"It is no robbery," he said; "no one has so good a right to it as I," he thought, pressing it close against his heart.

"Ready to go down, sah?" the darkey asked, as he entered, and speaking in a subdued tone as he noted the traces of deep emotion upon Howard's face.

"Reckon he must be a brudder, or cousin, or something, to feel so pow'ful bad," he soliloquized.

"Yes, I am ready." Howard returned, and silently followed him from the room.

At the lower door he put another piece of mouey in the boy's hand, and then, with a word of thanks for his kindness, he went away.

He had longed to ask something about the death of his child, and concerning Cecile, but he could not com-

mand himself sufficiently; and perhaps, after all, the boy would know nothing about Daisy, as he had only been there so short a time, and he did not care to betray anything of his trouble to curious eyes.

"It cannot matter," he sighed, as he turned his step toward his hotel; "it would only keep my wounds bleeding, and I cannot bear much more."

Yet, if he could have known where his child had been laid, it would have comforted him somewhat to have gone to that little grave and laid some tribute upon it expressive of the tender love that was surging within his heart for her.

CHAPTER XXX.

SHORN OF HER GLORY.

MEANWHILE Helen Langley was playing the part of an interesting widow at Saratoga, with her bombazine and heavy *crepe*, her dainty caps and deeply-bordered handkerchiefs.

She was a strikingly handsome woman, and wherever she went she was sure to attract attention. Tall, willowy in form, with a proudly poised head, a clear, brilliant complexion, hair like jet and eyes like black diamonds, and with an undisputed position and the reputation of possessing an exhaustless purse, she could not fail to be a mark for admiring eyes in any place.

But she had not a suspicion of what her brother was about, for she had not heard from him for three weeks, and she was beginning to feel quite anxious about him.

But the time had passed very swiftly, for Dr. Anthony, for some reason, had recently made his appearance also at Saratoga, and seeking Mrs. Langley's society, had, in a quiet way, constituted himself her escort and companion on all occasions.

The more she saw of him the more she became interested in him. He had a widely-extended reputation, was highly cultivated, and, although not remarkably handsome, was distinguished in his appearance, and possessed the power of making himself exceedingly entertaining.

Thus the time spent in his society seemed very short, and her brother was hardly missed.

But one morning she was aroused from this *dolce far niente* in no gentle manner.

A letter from Howard, brief, but of terrible import,

had come at last, and its contents, for the time being, crushed the proud woman to the earth.

"DEAR HELEN:—The administrator appointed by the court to settle William's affairs has just left me. He says the bubble in which the colonel invested so largely has burst, and every dollar is sunk; the bulk of your own fortune was used in the same way, I believe. And this is not all; the block on West Forty-third Street was burned last night, and the papers of the day before gives an account of the failure of the insurance company in which it was principally insured. I find, upon looking over the papers which you gave me, that William owed quite a number of debts, and if anything remains, these of course must be paid. This is bad news, Helen, and were it not for me, you would truly be placed in very trying circumstances. But do not fret—you are all that I have now in the world, and while I live you shall want for nothing; if I die, you of course would inherit my fortune. I will save what I can from the wreck, but I may as well tell you first as last that it will be precious little. You need not come home if you like to remain where you are, and I will send you a check in a day or two for all your needful expenses.

"Your affectionate brother, H. MONTGOMERY."

"Bad news! *I should think so!*" Helen Langley cried, savagely, after reading this letter, her face white and almost convulsed with mortification and anger, while she passionately tore the missive into strips.

"All that immense property gone to the winds, and my own private fortune sacrificed with the rest! I was a *fool* to let him touch it!" she almost screamed, in a paroxysm of rage and pain.

To be poor, in her estimation, was the unpardonable sin; to be obliged to work for one's living was to be reduced to the very depth of degredation and shame.

She could wink at follies and dissipation, she could smile blandly upon brainless fops and simpering, ignorant girls, and cultivate the acquaintance of old men and

women in their dotage, if they but possessed that magical passport, wealth.

Because of the unfortunate circumstances which had reduced Cecile to poverty she had sought to ruin her life, and heaped all manner of abuse and insult upon her; and she would have been glad to drive her forth friendless and alone, to beg or starve, rather than that such a blot should fall upon the fair escutcheon of a Montgomery—*that he should marry a beggar.*

Now the tables were turned, and *she* was shorn of all her glory.

It was not a pleasant thought, and it came home to her with a force that made her cheeks tingle and her proud eyes droop from shame.

She stood exactly where Cecile Vavasour had stood a little over four years ago; and if any one had come to her and talked as she had talked to that fair young girl on the day before her marriage, she believed she should have *killed* that one. She had married Colonel Langley because she was ambitious, and he was an eligible *parti*, and because such a marriage would increase and strengthen her own fortune and position. She did not know the meaning of the word love when she became his wife, and although they had always got along comfortably together, she experienced no poignant grief when he died, as we have already seen from her solicitude regarding his will.

During her short acquaintance with Dr. Anthony, however, she had been more powerfully attracted, more easily swayed by him than by any one else during her whole life; and she had already begun to consider whether, when a suitable season for mourning had elapsed, it would not be worth her while to strive to win him. At all events, she always exerted herself to be particularly entertaining whenever he honored her with his presence.

Dr. Anthony's position in a worldly point was above criticism, while his wonderful skill and success in treating diseases of the brain had given him a wide reputation; and, added to these pleasing facts was the import-

ant one that he was possessor of a fortune of at least half a million.

So Mrs. Langley had sighed over her brother's unhappiness in his sympathizing ear, expressing her deepest gratitude for the timely aid he had given him abroad—confided to him her own troubles, and consulted him upon some slight derangement of her own system, and strove to interest him in her generally, with an eye to the future.

She was very intelligent, very brilliant, and very fascinating when she chose, and it is not to be wondered at that the talented physician was attracted by her, and that, as he had very few acquaintances at the Springs, he spent much of his time in her society.

But when she had received Howard's letter, and learned that she had been reduced from affluence to poverty—that all her boasted wealth had "taken to itself wing," and she was entirely dependent upon her brother's generosity for even the bread she ate—she who had recklessly spent her hundreds on a whim was crushed by the blow.

"What a fool I have been!" she said, again and again, "to allow William to touch one dollar of my fortune. I might have had it all to-day but for his stupid speculations; and now I must go to Howard for every cent I need."

It was long before she could regard the situation with any degree of calmness. She spent most of the day in weeping and bemoaning her terrible misfortune, in fretting over the disgrace of being poor, and having the world know that she, a Montgomery, had lost her all.

"I never can endure it," she cried, passionately, "to have the finger of pity pointed at me—to have people say, 'Poor thing! she lost everything through her husband's speculations,' and then turn coldly away from me."

Then she emembered her brother's words, "While I live you shall want for nothing," and perhaps after all, the world need not know of *her* loss; they would of

course learn of her husband's; she could still have Howard's ample fortune to fall back upon; she need not curtail in anything, and she could move in the same circles, shine in the same society as heretofore; and if, by and by, she could win George Anthony and his half million, she need borrow no trouble for the future.

In the midst of this scheming there flashed upon her memory that scene in the grounds of Vavasour Place, where she had gone to try and break Cecile's engagement with her brother.

She had said to her:

"I will not have Howard lose caste by stooping to wed a girl like you without a dollar to her name," and "A Montgomery never yet lowered himself by marrying into a poor family."

She flushed an angry red to her very brow as these scathing, insulting words rose up to reproach her now.

Did she not stand in the same position that that beautiful girl had then occupied? and did she therefore consider herself unfit to wed even the best man in the country on account of it?

If it was a disgrace for a Montgomery to wed a beggar, how would it be regarded for a man of wealth and position to marry a beggared Montgomery?

How would it be with George Anthony? Would it "injure his social standing," his "business prospects," and would he "become the talk of his whole circle of acquaintance," if he should marry *her* now?

She had never anticipated that her own words would rise up and condemn her thus, and she now realized something of what Cecile must have suffered, and something of her depth of affection when she had straightened her slight form, and answered in those sweet, yet ringing tones:

"No, Mrs. Langley; I am going to marry Mr. Montgomery because *I love him!*"

It seemed as if the past were bound to haunt her today, for, following this, that scene in her own drawing-room, on that day when her brother's wife had returned in such trouble from Europe, came up before her with almost startling vividness.

She had come to her heart-broken, penniless, and friendless, and she had scornfully repulsed her, had refused her aid or shelter, and used all her influence to keep even what rightfully belonged to her from her.

Surely she was reaping something of her reward now for it.

Then she recalled how proudly the desolate young wife and mother had gone forth from her presence; how patiently she had toiled for bread for her child since; how bravely she had battled with the world and poverty, rising above her troubles, and conquering, by her energy and perseverance, her adverse fate, and winning a competence for herself.

She realized for the first time that it had been no light thing for her to do; that she was not the simple, inefficient girl she had always represented her to be, but a brave, strong, loving woman.

What could *she* do now, and where would she be if it were not for her brother?—the man whose life she had been striving to ruin by keeping him from this noble wife!

She *knew* that she could not battle with sorrow and poverty as Cecile had done; that she had neither the courage nor the ability; she knew that she would weakly sink into oblivion and despair if left alone, and that that beautiful girl, who was at least eight years younger than herself, was by far her superior; she had matured into grand and queenly beauty, while in character she was stronger, purer, and nobler in every way.

"Why does she haunt me so to-day?" she exclaimed, springing from her chair, when she could endure her thoughts no longer. "Have I not enough to bear and think of, without having her thrust upon me thus?

"No one shall ever know of my poverty," she went on, lifting her head haughtily. "I will never raise my hand to fight against it—a Montgomery *work!*—never. I will still glory in my name and race, and no one shall ever suspect the truth.

"I suppose *good people* would say that conscience was troubling me with these thoughts of the past, in connec-

tion with my loss," she resumed, scornfully, after pacing excitedly up and down her room for some time; "but I will rise above *that* weakness at least. I have *hated* her from the moment that she so proudly defied me; I will go on hating her to the end; and if I ever meet her again, I will crush her if I can. I wish she need never enter my thoughts again; I wish I could consign her to oblivion forever. I will go out; I shall go wild if I remain shut up here thinking. I will cast care to the winds, take the goods the gods provide, and use all my arts to secure for myself a brilliant future."

She acted upon her resolution at once; arrayed herself with great care, and went out for a walk, hoping to encounter Dr. Anthony, and forget in his presence all unpleasant thoughts and cares.

She did meet him—but, how?

It seemed to her, as she entered Congress Park, and almost at the gate met George Anthony face to face, and passed him by without hardly a sign of recognition, *because she dare not appear to know his companion*—it seemed to her, I say, as if all the spirits of evil had conspired to drive her wild by a complication of startling developments and surprises, and a feeling of helplessness took possession of her as she wondered what would come next.

CHAPTER XXXI.

AN OPPORTUNE MEETING.

GEORGE ANTHONY had come to the Springs for a short holiday during the heated weather before returning to his duties at the South.

He had left New York some time before Mrs. Langley and her brother, but did not arrive at Saratoga until after Howard had returned to the city.

He was quite disappointed upon discovering the absence of his friend, but gallantly devoted himself to the brilliant young widow, and soon found that he was becoming deeply interested in her.

She had thus far shown only the agreeable side of her character to him, and he had yet to learn the wiles of which she was capable.

"I have always thought that I should devote myself exclusively to my profession—that I was not a marrying man," he said to himself on the very morning of the day of which we are writing, "but I declare I have never met such a fascinating woman as Howard's sister before—she would make a most charming companion, if she is *always* as I have seen her."

During the afternoon he had gone for a stroll in Congress Park, hoping, it must be confessed, to meet the lady of whom he was continually thinking.

He spent an hour or more wandering about in the cool, shady walks and avenues, and finally coming to the conclusion that she was not there, turned his steps toward the entrance, thinking he would run up to the Grand Union and see if she would not like to go for a drive out to the lake; a plan about which they had been talking for several days.

Had this project been carried out, there is no knowing what might have happened, for although Colonel Langley had not yet been dead quite three months, Dr. Anthony's duties would soon call him far away, and he might have been led to commit himself in some way that would betray to her something of what he was contemplating.

As he drew near the gate his attention was attracted to the figure of a tall, graceful lady who was walking just in front of him.

She was very plainly dressed in black, but the material was soft and rich, and there was a quiet air of elegance about her that betrayed at once the lady.

"What an exquisitely formed woman!" George Anthony mentally exclaimed as he watched her. "She has a step and carriage fit for a queen, and every movement is full of grace."

Hardly was the thought complete when he sprang forward with a cry of dismay.

Without warning of any kind the graceful woman whom he was observing so closely had fallen suddenly to the ground.

"Madam, are you injured?" George Anthony asked, as he reached her side and stooped to raise her to her feet, while his face expressed great concern.

"Thanks, no," she retured, in a clear, sweet voice. "I stepped on a rolling stone, and it turned my ankle and threw me. I was very careless."

As she spoke she turned upon him the fairest, most perfect face that he had ever seen in his life; but it was a face withal that stirred his tender sympathies deeply, for it told of a great sorrow borne at some time during her life.

He started as he gazed upon it.

The features seemed familiar, but he could not remember that he had ever seen them before.

Her complexion was like tinted wax, her azure eyes "like homes of silent prayer," lips of brightest scarlet, and she had hair that framed the whole like a golden halo.

But even as he looked, the delicate color faded entirely from her cheeks, an expression of pain settled about her lips, and as she endeavored to step she stumbled.

"You *are* hurt, I am afraid," the physician said, reaching out his hand and gently supporting her.

"I think I must have sprained my foot a little, but if I can reach my carriage I shall be all right," she returned, but striving to conceal how much she was hurt.

"Allow me, then, to assist you to it," Dr. Anthony begged, in his most courteous tone, as he offered his arm for her support.

"Thank you," she said, as she accepted it; "I fear I shall be obliged to trouble you;" and he thought the neatly-gloved hand which fell softly upon it the most perfect he had ever seen.

They proceeded at a slow pace toward the gate, which was only a few steps distant, and just as they were passing through they were confronted by Helen Langley!

She stopped short, a low cry escaping her, her face growing livid from astonishment, anger and hatred, as her eyes fell upon the couple who but a few moments before had met.

She had not observed the accident; so, of course, could not know how it happened that her admirer was in the company of this beautiful woman.

She recovered herself, however, almost intantly, and bowed haughtily to Dr. Anthony, who smiled as he raised his hat to her, although he wondered at the passionate look of wrath which she had shot from her midnight eyes at his companion.

This display of feeling from one whom he had admired so much made him a trifle uncomfortable, and he glanced at the lady leaning upon his arm to see if she also had observed it.

He was no less startled at the change he saw upon her face.

There was a vivid flush upon her cheeks; her lovely eyes glittered like jets of blue flame, and her small

white teeth compressed her under-lip until it was bloodless. Her head was proudly erect, and her whole countenance had grown cold and hard.

Was she suffering from pain caused by her fall, or from agitation at this meeting with Mrs. Langley? he wondered.

Did they know each other?

If so, there had been no token of recognition beyond this strange emotion.

Perhaps they had been rivals during some time in the past, and Mrs. Langley was angry because of his attention to her.

He began to feel his curiosity aroused.

Just outside the gate, his companion beckoned to a coachman, who sat upon his carriage-box not far distant, and in obedience to her signal he immediately approached.

"I am greatly indebted to you, sir, for your kindness," she said, turning to Dr. Anthony as the carriage stopped beside them.

"Do not mention it, madam," he answered, heartily, and feeling sure that he had seen those strangely beautiful eyes before; but where, he could not remember. "I am thankful that I was near at hand to lend you aid. I trust you are not seriously injured."

"Oh, no," she replied, smiling—such a rare, sweet smile, that it remained like a sunbeam in his memory for many a day; "it is nothing but what a little rest and attention will set all right, I think."

He assisted her to enter the carriage; and then leaning toward her, he said, earnestly, for he saw she had grown pale again, "A sprain sometimes proves more troublesome than we imagine, if neglected."

"I will not neglect it," she replied, the color coming back for an instant to her cheeks at his manifest interest in her.

Then, bowing graciously, and giving him a look from her grave sweet eyes that thrilled him strangely, she gave her order to the driver to return to the hotel, and was whirled away.

"Beautiful in form and feature,
Lovely as the day;
Can there be so fair a creature
Formed of common clay?"

George Anthony murmured as he watched that vision of loveliness out of sight, and then turned to retrace his steps in search of Helen Langley.

But, somehow, she did not seem half so attractive to him as heretofore; the spell which she had cast about him was suddenly dissolved.

He found her sitting upon a rustic seat near a fountain, and not very far from where the accident had occurred.

She was still pale, and there was a forbidding gleam in her dark eyes.

Her face, so cold, so hard, was like February compared with that other, which was like the first faint blush of a summer's day.

The contrast was not a pleasant one to him, nor favorable to her, and as he sat down beside her he half regretted that he had returned to seek her.

"I've just met with an adventure," he said, removing his hat, and beginning to fan himself with it, for the afternoon was very oppressive.

"An adventur*ess*," Helen Langley thought, wrathfully, in her heart.

"I judged so when I met you just now. Who was that woman with you?" she returned, and bending a suspicious glance upon him.

"I do not know," he replied, with his eyes resting absently upon the fleecy clouds that were floating in huge masses above them.

"You do not know?" Helen repeated, regarding him curiously, while a sigh of relief escaped her at the assurance.

"No." I was about to ask you the same question.

"Me!" she ejaculated, in well-feigned surprise. "Pray, why should you ask me that?"

"I don't know why, only I imagined from the look that you gave her as we passed you, that she must be some one whom you had once known," the doctor re-

plied, now turning his eyes upon her with a scrutinizing glance.

"No," she said, dropping her eyes, and coloring in evident confusion. "I—I was only surprised to meet you with her—I thought you knew no one here."

An hour ago George Anthony would have been strangely moved by these words—this almost confession of jealousy on account of his attention to another.

They implied that he was more to her than he thought—that his evident familiarity with another beautiful woman had occasioned her annoyance and even distress.

But with that dazzlingly fair countenance, those lustrous eyes and scarlet lips still haunting his memory; with those clear, yet sweetly-modulated tones still ringing in his ears, and that rare smile still thrilling his heart, he scarcely heard them, or, if he did, he did not heed them.

"She was very beautiful," he murmured, absently.

Helen Langley flashed a dangerous look at him, but vouchsafed no reply to his remark.

"Do you not think so?" he asked, noticing her silence and looking up.

"How can I tell? I scarcely saw *her*," she answered, with something of impatience, and shrugging her graceful shoulders.

He might have felt flattered had he noticed her last words—she had barely looked at his companion; her attention had all been given to him.

But her spell was broken, her power over him was gone, at least for that day.

"Her face was like that of a Madonna—it had an almost holy beauty—and her form like that of a Venus."

"Really, Dr. Anthony, I never would have believed that you could be guilty of so much sentiment," Mrs. Langley remarked, sarcastically. "I'm sure I paid no attention to either the face or form of this charmer, but I *am* positive that she limped as she walked."

Dr. Anthony looked up into that brilliant, flushed face beside him, and laughed aloud.

Her spirited reply amused him although he did not at that moment half comprehend its venom.

"Of course she limped, and I have not told you my adventure, after all," he said, arousing himself from his abstraction, and thinking, perhaps, she had cause to be annoyed with him.

And then he related to her how he had chanced to meet the lovely stranger, while she listened, greatly relieved that their interview had been no longer, and hoped that adverse fate would never throw them into each other's society again.

Her spirits rose after this, and she exerted herself to be as entertaining as possible; but she could plainly see, and she grew inwardly furious with the knowledge, that his mind was still filled with visions of that "beautiful woman."

CHAPTER XXXII.

MRS. LANGLEY'S FEARS.

THAT "beautiful woman" was no other than Cecile. Helen Langley had recognized her instantly, and all the passion and hatred of her fiery Southern nature was aroused when she beheld her leaning upon the arm of the man whom she had determined to win for her second husband.

"*How came she here?* She pursues me like an avenging spirit," she cried, angrily, as, after passing Dr. Anthony and his companion, she hastened on out of their sight, and dropped upon the first seat that she came to.

Her face was almost convulsed with inward rage, her heart full of malice and venom, those

"Fierce demons that in darkness dwell;"

and she looked entirely unlike that brilliant, smiling woman whom the distinguished physician was learning to admire so greatly.

"It is no wonder that my thoughts were full of her this morning," she pursued with lowering brow. "'Coming events were but casting their shadows before.' What evil genius brings her here I should like to know? How does it happen that she meets and thwarts me at every turn?"

At this moment, as if to enrage her still more, there issued from the boughs just over her head those peculiar yet familiar sounds:

"Katy did; she did, she did."

This little circumstance, although so trivial in itself, yet, combined with everything else, was more than her fiery nature could bear.

With crimson face and flashing eyes she bounded from her seat, and struck at the bough with all the passion of a child with her parasol.

The visible but tormenting little sprites thus, for the moment silenced, she sat down again and resumed her musings.

"How on earth did she ever become acqnainted with *him?* and shall I ever set my heart upon *anything* that she will not outwit me in attaining? I am afraid everything will be upset now," she pursued, nervously. "He will be sure to tell Howard that he has seen her; my plotting will all come to naught, and I shall be ruined."

It was always so—she always won everybody by her wiles, she thought, angrily, forgetting that those very wiles were a lovely spirit, true kindness, and gentle breeding added to great natural beauty and grace.

And with these bitter thoughts surging in her heart like molten lava, George Anthony found her, and told her of his adventure with Cecile.

She was intensely relieved upon discovering that he did not even know her name; and she began to take courage immediately, and to rack her brain for some way to escape the impending danger, and to prevent the physician from meeting her fascinating sister-in-law again.

"If he does not even know who she is, there is no great harm done as yet," she thought, after he had left her and she was alone in her room once more. "I will look out that they do not become any better acquainted. I must arrange some way to get away from here, and make him go, too, as soon as possible. Meantime I must monopolize all his attention to keep him out of danger."

A most unhappy woman was Mrs. Colonel Langley for the next few days.

She was continually watching for the reappearance of Cecile, starting nervously and straining her gaze at every strange woman in black whom she met.

She was consumed with a torturing curiosity to know

what circumstance, or combination of circumstances, had served to bring her brother's wife to Saratoga.

"She can never have *earned* enough to allow her to flourish in a fashionable place like Saratoga," she reasoned; "and yet she was richly though plainly dressed. It cannot be possible that she has, after all, married Dr. Mortimer and come hither on her wedding tour. No, for she would not still be wearing black if that was the case; and yet she might, too, for Daisy. I cannot understand it."

She did not like to think—particularly now since learning of her own poverty—that Cecile had risen to a position like this—to be able to afford the luxuries of high-toned Saratoga, achieving an independence superior to her own at this time, all by her own efforts.

Cecile's words—those last ringing, defiant words that she had uttered that morning after her return from Europe—came back to her now with a vividness and force which were galling in the extreme.

"You may imagine, perhaps," she had said, towering above her in her proud beauty, "that you can *crush* me; but—*you cannot do it*, and you will live to realize that fact in more senses than one—you will find yet that a *Vavasour is a match for a Montgomery!*"

Was that threat about to be fulfilled?

Had she not already discovered that Cecile was *more* than a match for her in their contention for Daisy?

The contest between them had been a severe one from the first; but with all the odds against her, the high-spirited, resolute girl had won every battle.

She had married her brother defying every threat. She had conquered poverty and risen to affluence when she had put forth every effort to crush her. Her mother-instinct had led her to follow the trail of her child, and she had confronted her with a courage and determination which had completely and ignominiously routed her. Would she win in this last, this decisive conflict? Would she regain her husband, wealth, position, happiness, in spite of her?

She began to fear so, and to tremble for the result of her many schemes.

She well knew that if Howard should chance to meet her, or if Cecile should dream of his return and let him know of her existence, her own chances for the future would be very small.

He never would forgive her for what she had done—he would doubtless cast her off from his love, deny her his protection, perhaps even refuse to grant her means sufficient for a scanty support, and she would sink out of sight into oblivion.

She, a boasted Montgomery!

Such a fate would be worse than death to the proud-spirited, passionate Southerner.

She had cursed the ill-luck which had sent Cecile to California in pursuit of her child; but since Howard's return she had begun to think perhaps it had been better so, because it had taken her out of his way, and beyond all knowledge of all that had transpired.

She could not have failed to learn that he had come home if she remained in New York, for the reporters had eagerly seized upon his romantic experiences, and for awhile the newspapers were full of them.

If she had only stayed in California all would have been well, she thought—remember, she did not know of Howard's journey thither; but this sudden reappearance of hers in Saratoga threatened destruction to all her artful schemes.

While she continues to plot, trying to gather all her forces for a "*coup de grace,*" let *us* see how it chanced that Cecile came to Saratoga at this season so inopportune for Mrs. Langley's plans, and also at the very time when her husband was making his desperate pilgrimage to California to see for himself how matters stood there.

Little Daisy was indeed believed to be dying by the whole household at Mrs. Lawson's on the night when Mrs. Langley went to inquire for her.

She had taken a second cold—not while being moved from Mrs. Scherman's, but in some unaccountable way afterward, and it had resulted in a severe attack of croup.

Dr. Mortimer was well-nigh discouraged upon the appearance of this dread disease, especially while the little one was so weakened from her previous illness; but he could not relinquish all of hope.

He felt that he could not have her die—that he must save this beautiful child—this one hope and comfort of the woman he had grown to love with a depth and fervor which at times almost startled him.

For hours he hung over her, watching every symptom, every breath, and doing all that mortal could do; while Cecile in mute anguish watched his every movement, feeling numb and helpless in the presence of this last crushing trial.

"There is only one thing more that I can do—only one thing which gives the least hope of saving her," he said, looking up at the despairing mother with a white but determined face, as each breath grew more distressing than the last, after he had exhausted his medical skill.

"And what is that?" whispered Cecile, with a stony face.

"Tracheotomy, or making an incision and inserting a canula in the windpipe," he answered, briefly, but watching to see how she would receive the information.

She shuddered, and covered her eyes with her hands.

"You could not bear it," he said, sorrowfully.

"There is no other hope?" she pleaded, pitifully.

"None—not the faintest."

There was an awful silence in that room for a few moments.

Then the wretched mother looked up at him with a face like that of a spirit, but apparently calm.

"Then it must be done," she said, clearly and distinctly.

He looked relieved.

"Will you—can you trust me to do it, or would you prefer that I should consult with some one else?"

"If you say that you can do it, I can trust you," she returned quietly.

A wave of tenderness, like moonlight on the sea,

swept over his face, making it beautiful as a woman's, at her words, and he longed to clasp her to his heart.

But it was no time for the indulgence of sentiment, for he knew that every moment was precious—whatever was done must be quickly done now.

He left the room for a few moments, and when he returned he carried a small case of instruments in his hand.

"Perhaps it would be best for you to go away and send Mrs. Lawson to me," he said, in a low voice, to Cecile, as he noticed how deathly pale she had grown.

A slight tremor shook her frame, but she gave no other sign of her horror of the contemplated operation.

"No," she said, steadily; "I shall not leave here, and I would rather no one else came. I will do everything just as you tell me."

"I am afraid you cannot bear it," Dr. Mortimer returned, somewhat anxiously.

He knew that the sight of her suffering, if she should give way, would disturb him, and he would need all his nerve for what was before him.

"I can bear *anything* that will save her. I shall give you all the assistance that you will need. Do not fear to call on me," she said so firmly that he felt assured she would not fail him.

With a silent prayer for help, Dr. Mortimer bent all his energies to the task he had undertaken.

With a stern, set face, but with a steady, unerring hand, he performed that delicate and dangerous operation, through which lay his only hope of saving his little patient—calling upon Cecile in low, quiet tones whenever he needed help; while she, nerved to endurance by the absorbing love within her, never faltered through the whole.

It was over at last, and the child lay breathing easily once more. They no longer had to listen to those hoarse, distressing sounds which had nearly driven the whole household wild, and had so startled and alarmed Mrs. Langley as she stood at the door. But they could not, for some time yet, know what the result would be. They could only pray, and hope, and wait.

All day, and through another night, the faithful physician watched, and worked, and prayed; and when the second morning broke, and he felt that the symptoms were more favorable and promising, he sank wearily into a chair beside the anxious mother, who looked like a broken flower herself, and murmured a reverent:

"Thank God! I trust—I believe—He *will* spare her, after all."

A long-drawn, sobbing sigh heaved Cecile's chest. She was too exhausted either to weep or to speak, but she lifted her grateful eyes for one instant to his face, then bent her proud, beautiful head and touched her lips to that skillful right hand which had done so much to save her darling. It was a tribute that well-nigh unnerved the strong man.

It was all that he could do to refrain from gathering her into his arms, lay her head upon his breast, soothe her with loving, tender words, and bid her weep out her full heart there.

But he would take no ungenerous advantage of her gratitude, and he schooled himself to patience, hoping, by and by, to win the reward which he so coveted.

While Helen Langley was speeding over the glistening rails of the Union Pacific, and drawing near her home, where Death had indeed fixed his relentless dart, Daisy began slowly but surely to mend.

She seemed like some tiny frost-bitten flower, which a single rough breath would waft away, as she lay helplessly upon the soft pillow, upon which they were obliged to tend her.

But she appeared to absorb vitality from the faithful, loving watcher who never left her.

Sleeping or waking, Cecile would resign her to no one else. When she rested she would lie down beside her and catch what sleep she could; and when she was awake she hung over her with such yearning tenderness that it seemed as if she compelled her to live by the force of her love and will.

And Daisy clung to her constantly. As soon as she

recovered consciousness and began to realize what was passing around her, she became extremely nervous, starting wildly at the sound of every opening or shutting door, and crying out piteously, as if she feared being spirited away again.

"Mamma, mamma, Daisy afraid!" and her little fingers would weave themselves about her mother's hand, cleaving to her with all the strength that she possessed.

But gradually, as she came to realize that the loved one never left her, she grew to feel more confidence and became less timid; she improved from day to day, and after a few weeks she was able to be dressed, and even to totter weakly about about the room.

One day, when she seemed very much better than usual, Dr. Mortimer insisted that both mother and child should go out for a drive.

"It is a bright, sunny day, and you both look as if you belonged rather to the spiritual than to the physical world," he said, with an anxious glance into Cecile's thin, pale face.

As she met his eyes, which betrayed more of his heart than he was aware of, she shrank from him for the first time during their acquaintance.

Of late she had begun to be conscious of the tenderness which he could not wholly repress; she had read in his glances something of the love which he found it so hard to conceal, and to-day there was that in his manner which told her that a crisis was at hand, and the knowledge filled her with dismay.

"I think a drive would do us good," she returned, with averted eyes, while she busied herself with fastening Daisy's shoe, "but, Dr. Mortimer, we have already imposed upon your time far more than we have any right to do; if you will order an easy carriage with a driver I think we could do very well by ourselves."

His face clouded slightly.

"Surely you will not deny me the pleasure of giving Daisy her first airing?" he pleaded, gently.

There could be no refusal to such a petition, and Cecile quietly allowed him to have his way.

It was truly a most perfect day.

A delicious breeze swept inland from the sea, and as they drove out to one of the many beautiful parks which adorn the city the faces of both mother and child gave promise that the rose-bloom might yet be coaxed back to its nest upon their cheeks.

Poor Cecile was sadly worn from her long and wearying vigil, but her heart was filled with hope once more; and her eyes, as they looked down upon the contented face of her little one, shone with a happier expression than Dr. Mortimer had ever seen in them before.

The balmy atmosphere gradually overcame Daisy, and ere their drive was half over her bright head had sunk back upon her mother's breast, and she was in a profound slumber.

"See how she has seemed to gather health already," Cecile said, with a fond smile, as she softly touched the delicate pink which was tinging the little cheek.

His eyes glowed as he looked upon them both.

They made a picture which thrilled him through and through—a picture which he longed to make his own forever.

He had grown to love the fragile, beautiful child, whom twice he had, as it were, brought back from death's door, very tenderly; she had twined herself about his heart like a little vine about a strong oak. But he actually worshiped the woman who was her mother.

Her nature was strong without a fiber of coarseness in it; she was possessed of no common degree of intelligence, and a beauty which attracted every one; while her pure and lofty character, her self-sacrificing spirit and gentleness, made her seem almost divine to this equally noble-hearted man.

"Yes," he said, in reply to her observation, "she is looking better, and if I could see more of promise in your own white face I should be quite content."

The look which accompanied this remark did far more than either his words or the air toward instantly producing the result which he desired, and a vivid scar-

let rushed over her whole countenance and lost itself among the gold above her brow.

But the beautiful color did not stay; the tide swept back upon her heart, leaving her whiter than before; while, to escape those loving eyes, she bent down to cover Daisy more carefully.

A short distance of awkward silence, and Dr. Mortimer could endure the suspense no longer.

He bent forward and laid his hand lightly upon hers, his face nearly as colorless as her own, an intense light in his eyes, an agitated quiver about his lips, while he said:

"Mrs. Montgomery—Cecile—I cannot command myself another hour in your presence. I love you, and I must know my fate—be it hope, or despair."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"DID YOU LOVE HIM LIKE THAT?"

CECILE'S bright head was bent lower still at this vehement declaration; a grieved expression disturbed the sweet mouth; the tears welled up to her eyes, and breaking there scattered themselves like tiny diamonds upon their golden-fringed lids.

The man who loved her was quick to notice all these signs—quick to interpret them; but he went on in deep, earnest tones:

"I think these feelings began to exist during those sad days when you depended upon me, and trusted me so entirely during that never-to-be-forgotten voyage across the Atlantic. Looking back now, I can see that something deeper than mere sympathy stirred my heart for you even then; but I did not become fully conscious of it until since you appealed to me in this last trouble; and during these weeks that we have spent in each other's society I have grown to feel that your love is the only thing which will henceforth make my life complete. Cecile, words are faint to express all my devotion; if I could but give utterance to half of what there is in my heart, I should draw you into it, as the magnet draws the needle to itself. Dear, I am thirty-seven years old—much older than you, who cannot have seen more than twenty-one or two summers and winters; but I have never loved any one before. Once or twice I have met some one who for a little while attracted me, but something held me back from giving them my love. I know why it was now—I was waiting for you, who alone could fill my life with contentment. With you as my wife, I shall have gained all of earth most desirable—*will* you be my wife, Cecile? I will care for you so tenderly that

henceforth, while I live, you shall have nothing to regret which it is in my power to help. You have suffered in the past—your pathway has been rough; let me smooth it for you from this time—come and rest with me; let me win both you and this little treasure, whom also I love with no common affection. My beloved, what may I hope for?"

She looked up to him piteously as he concluded, her soulful eyes brimming with tears; but for a moment she could not command herself sufficiently to reply.

Then she said, tremulously:

"Every good thing which my grateful heart can wish, and which your own goodness deserves, except—that which you ask."

His face blanched.

"Do not tell me that!" he cried, and the sharp despair in his tone sent an icy pain shivering through her veins. "I believe I could bear any other sorrow that heaven might send upon me, no matter how bitter, better than the knowledge that I have loved you in vain. Cecile, it *cannot* be that God has permitted me to build upon a false foundation," and his hand closed upon hers as it rested upon Daisy's shoulder, with an appealing clasp.

She did not withdraw it—she was nearly stunned by the revelation of his passionate, almost idolatrous love. She felt powerless before it—crushed by this wealth of devotion which he had sacrificed to her unrequiting heart.

Again she lifted her eyes to his, and they were full of mute distress, and he saw there was no hope in them for him.

"Cecile," he said sharply, and the sound pierced her like a knife, "I would rather that you should slay me with your hand than that your lips should tell me that I have loved you hopelessly."

"And I must—*I must*," she answered, in a shaking voice. "I cannot wrong you—I cannot wrong myself. Oh, Dr. Mortimer, why did you allow yourself to love me?—why did you let me spoil your life?"

"Why did I love you?" he repeated, hollowly, "be-

cause I could not help it—because yours is the only spirit kindred to my own in all this wide world—you *will* not tell me that I cannot win you!"

"Oh, my best friend, almost my *only* friend, you break my heart. I never thought to do you such injury by coming here, but it can never be as you wish," she replied, brokenly.

For a moment he swayed in his seat, and the reins nearly dropped from his hand.

But he made an effort to recover himself, and straightened in his seat, although a look of age seemed to have fallen over his face during the last few moments.

"Do you—you once told me that you believed that *he*—your husband—was dead," he said in a constrained voice, after a few moments of silence. "Is it because you are not quite certain that—that——"

"Yes, I believe that he is dead," Cecile said sadly, as he faltered and stopped, "or he would surely have come back to me before this. But I do not know it—oh, I do not know it! and even——"

She, too, hesitated, and glanced at him appealingly.

"Even what, my child?" he said so gently, but in such a hopeless tone that she covered her face and sobbed with pain.

"Oh, forgive me," she replied, after a moment, and struggling with her tears. "I would not pain you. I feel almost like a criminal, and you have been so good to me. All that I have left of comfort and happiness I owe to you; but—even if I knew, beyond a doubt, that Howard, my husband, was dead—if I knew at this moment just where his body was laid—I could tell you nothing different; my love for him was the one all-absorbing passion of my life, and even though he may be resting in some unknown spot in a foreign country, he is still mine and I am his; no other love could ever come into my heart; wherever I am, whatever I do, my soul will ever reach out after him with a yearning that can never be satisfied in this world; if I live to be old it will live with me—it will go down to the grave with me, and I shall only be content when God lifts the vail and allows us to be reunited for eternity."

"Child, did you love him like that?" he asked, in a subdued tone, while he regarded her almost nervously. "You know then," he added, a moment after, with a far-away, yet patient look in his eyes, "what my love for you is like, and I fear that your life will be as hopeless as mine, also, will henceforth be."

He knew that his dream was over—hers, also, he believed, although she had borne her sorrow with such fortitude that he had not realized it fully before, and she seemed like some holy martyr to him, and he mentally resolved that no word of his should ever pain her further by any reference to his hopeless love for her.

His hope was dead—it had been slain, as it were, at the moment when it had burned brightest and strongest; and all that he could now do was to lay it tenderly away in memory's vault, where he would treasure it as a sacred relic—glad, even in his pain, to know what it was to have loved so pure and lovely a woman—better too, for the sweet, short experience, even though it would darken all his future.

Cecile was deeply moved by his words, and her tears dropped thick and fast.

"Do not grieve because your truthfulness has shown me my folly," Dr. Mortimer said, while with his own handkerchief he wiped away the bright drops which had fallen, and lay glittering on sleeping Daisy's hair. "I might have known from my own nature that you, having loved once, could never love again. I was thoughtless, selfish——"

"No, *no*," she interrupted, almost passionately, "I cannot let you say such hard things of yourself. Next to my husband and child you hold the strongest place in my heart; you have been, you are like a dear elder brother to me—a friend, whom I *know* that I can trust as I trust myself. What should I have done without you during that terrible voyage? How could I have lived and borne the burdens of the last few weeks without your strong support—your kind care and sympathy?"

"If I have helped in any way to lighten your sorrows it is enough; my love will not have been wholly fruitless," he returned, in a patient tone.

"Wholly fruitless! Do you so undervalue yourself?" she cried, warmly; "have you not restored to me the most priceless thing I had—the life of my child? Oh, my friend, if prayers can bring blessings upon any one, mine will heap them upon you."

The drive was rather a silent one after this, although Dr. Mortimer exerted himself to point out all the objects of interest which they passed, and he took pains to take her through all the finest avenues of the Park, and then home by another way, that she might see some of the elegant buildings in a part of the city where she had never been before.

Notwithstanding the pain and disappointment and excitement of those few hours, Cecile gathered strength and vitality, and both she and Daisy were much better the next morning in consequence of the time they had spent in the open air and life-giving sunshine.

Every day after this they drove out, the doctor insisting that air was better than medicine; but he never referred again to the subject of that first drive.

They visited Golden Gate Park—that beautiful and attractive resort for all beauty-loving people, with its wide, cool avenues, its picturesque grottoes, and fine conservatory. Then there were Jackson, Buena Vista, Franklin and Holly Parks—all lovely spots, and Dr. Mortimer was determined that Cecile should see all that was possible of the great city before her return, which, he began to fear, since the unfortunate disclosure of his passion for her, was not far distant.

But he had the satisfaction of seeing both mother and child come back from each excursion looking brighter than before.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A FINAL FAREWELL.

CECILE had told Dr. Mortimer that she believed "God would give him his reward ere long," but she little dreamed how soon her prophecy, and his own also, would be fulfilled, for he had told her pehaps he might yet realize that God's way was best.

And yet he had no idea *how* he was to be led to see it, or how the hand which he trusted to lead him would guide him into light, and peace, and resignation.

He never again alluded in the slightest manner to what had passed between them during the remainder of her stay in San Francisco.

But she did not need to be told he suffered, nor that, for him, all the brightest hopes of his life had departed.

She saw it in the patient hopelessness of his eyes, and in those great circles underneath—in the pained curves of his lips, and the worn look of his whole face.

His manner toward her, however, was just the same —kind, courteous, considerate; but she was constantly oppressed by a feeling of guilt, a sense of reproach, as if she had done him some great wrong which she could never repair, and she began to be anxious to go away, thinking, perhaps, he might experience less of bitterness if he was not continually reminded of his disappointment by her presence.

She told him one day that, if he thought it would do for Daisy to travel, she felt as if she must return to New York; she was anxious to get home; and, besides, her business, so long neglected, demanded her immediate attention.

A deeper shade of sadness fell over his face at this,

and he did not make her any reply for a moment or two. At length he said:

"I think *some* change would be well for both you and Daisy; indeed, I think the state of your health demands it. You have been losing flesh constantly, and you will break down entirely unless you begin to mend soon. But it will not do for you to go back to that close city at present, and at this season of all times, and there must be no thought of 'business' for some time to come ——"

"But —" Cecile began, with an anxious look.

"'But me no buts,'" he quoted, trying to speak lightly, though his heart was sick and heavy at the thought of losing her; it was pain to meet her day by day and know that she could never be anything more to him; but it would be more bitter still to be deprived of her gentle presence entirely.

"It is absolutely imperative that you should rest for some time yet," he continued. You are worn almost to a shadow, and my greatest wonder is that you have not given out before this. You must go to some watering-place. If you could go to Saratoga Springs for awhile and drink the water, it would be of the greatest benefit to both Daisy and you."

Cecile looked grave at this advice.

The expenses of her journey hitherto had been considerable, and she expected that Mrs. Lawson's bill would be no light one, while a protracted visit to Saratoga would surely not help to increase her store.

But health, of course, was of the utmost importance, and she had realized of late that her strength was failing, and that the strain of watching and anxiety, loss of sleep and appetite, had been more than her system could well bear.

"How long would it be necessary for us to remain there?" she asked, thoughtfully.

"Five or six months at the least," Dr. Mortimer answered. "And," he added, speaking authoritatively, "you must send for Martha to come and relieve you of the care of Daisy; it is necessary that you have entire

rest, and attend to yourself now, or I will not answer for the consequences."

"I think I shall do very well, if I can only keep *her* well," Cecile said, a little spot of color coming to either cheek, but with her eyes upon Daisy.

She had tried to conceal from him what her feelings had been.

"You will *not* do very well," he returned, ignoring her reference to her child. "Your nerves have had a very severe trial—your constitution, generally, such a strain, that you cannot bear anything more. Every morning you are so languid and weary that it is an effort for you to move. Every afternoon you are feverish, and so nervous that you are ready to cry out at every sound, although you try bravely to exercise self-control."

Cecile looked up at him with tears in her eyes.

How well he knew and had described her feelings! How great must be the care and watchfulness that could detect what she had tried so hard to hide from him!

"I did not believe *any one* knew how I felt," she murmured, wearily; for even then she wished she might go away and lie down somewhere and not be disturbed for a month.

"Child," he said, with a gentle reproachfulness, "did you imagine that you could conceal it from *me?*"

"But one does not like to yield to weakness," she replied.

"No; your will's much too strong for your organization; but you will heed me now, will you not? he asked, anxiously.

"Yes, I shall obey you and go to Saratoga. I know you would not tell me it was necessary if it was not, and I myself realize the truth of what you have said," Cecile returned, gravely.

"And Martha? you will send for her?"

She gave him a troubled glance.

"Do you think it will not do for me to get along without her?" she asked.

"I *know* it will not," he said, decidedly; adding, with a troubled look:

"See how your hands tremble even now," and he pointed to them as she drew the cords to her morning robe, and tried to tie them in a knot with fingers that shook like leaves in the wind. "You must have *nothing* to do, not a care; you need to be *taken* care of yourself."

She allowed the cords to drop, and folded her thin hands on her lap with a weary sigh.

"I will send for Martha at once. She can meet me at Saratoga, and I think we will leave here the day after to-morrow," she said, quietly; but her face was very sad, for a fear of loneliness began to creep over her as she realized how much she had depended upon this strong, tender man during her sojourn there.

Again that pained look shot into Dr. Mortimer's eyes as she announced her decision; but he could not speak of his own feelings, and began to plan for her comfort, during her long journey, in the most thoughtful manner.

The day of her departure arrived.

When she went down to her breakfast she took her purse with her, and asked Mrs. Lawson for her bill, at the same time mentioning in the most grateful manner her appreciation of the great kindness she had shown her during Daisy's long illness, and indeed throughout her stay there.

But the good woman, wiping the tears of regret from her eyes, told her she had no bill to give her—there was nothing to pay.

Cecile was confounded.

"But, madam, of course I cannot accept an obligation like this from you! It would not be right," she began.

"Oh, no, not from me, although I must confess I never took more pleasure in entertaining any one. But the bill has all been attended to, Mrs. Montgomery. Dr. Mortimer said that you were to be his guest while you were here, and he has made it all right," Mrs. Lawson explained, rather awkwardly.

Cecile could say nothing, but she returned to her room

with a scarlet spot on both cheeks, and when Dr. Mortimer came in she somewhat proudly insisted upon having her bill.

He took both her hands in his, and said in tones of mild reproof:

"Cecile, you told me a little while ago that you had learned to regard me as a dear brother; a brother would not do less than I have done for you, and you would accept it unquestioningly from him. I am a strong man, with more than enough of this world's possessions; while you—Cecile, do you suppose that I do not know how this matter of expense is troubling you? Do not, I pray, refuse me the comfort of feeling that you have been my guest; let me do this little deed for you, and for the little one upstairs whom I love so well."

And Cecile could say no more; it would have been churlish and unkind to have refused after this.

Her composure well-nigh forsook her when Dr. Mortimer—after having attended to everything for her comfort at the station at Oakland, whither he had accompanied her—came to the little private compartment which he had taken for her in a palace car, so that Daisy might rest without being disturbed, to bid her "good-by."

He first took the little one into his arms, holding her in a close, clinging clasp, while he kissed many times the small, sweet face which was just beginning to look like itself once more.

Then he put her into a large chair, dropped a box of pretty toys into her lap, and turned to Cecile.

In silence, for the choking sensation in her throat would not let her speak, she gave him both her hands in a fierce clasp, of which he was utterly unconscious, in the bitter pain of this parting.

"You will write me immediately upon your arrival; I shall be very anxious to hear from you," he said, in unsteady tones.

"Yes, I will write," she returned, falteringly; "but, oh! my friend, you have been so good to me, and now, at this last moment, I cannot find words to thank you; but you *know* that I am not ungrateful."

"I do not want your gratitude," he answered sadly, "but I hope to retain a place in your memory always."

"You cannot doubt that you will," she said, with eager reproach; "my best friend, I could *never* forget you."

His lips trembled with the passionate feelings in his heart, which longed to find expression in words.

But he would not wound her again; he had promised her that he would not refer to his love, and he would not break his word.

"No; I think you will not forget me," he replied, with a mournful smile; "but if you are ever in trouble again—if you ever need me, you will let me know."

"I have no other friend who is tried and true—yes, if I need you, I will tell you," she said, sorrowfully.

The bell now rang, and he knew that he must go—the last moment had come.

"God bless you, Cecile, and if there is *anything* that will brighten your future, I pray that He will send it to you," was his parting benediction, while his eyes lingered on her face with a look that she never forgot—it was so full of a deathless love mingled with despair.

Stooping he touched her forehead lightly with his lips, leaving there a caress such as he would have given to a dearly loved sister, and then went quickly out; while she, with a sense of loneliness and desolation such as she had not experienced for months, hid her face in her hands and sobbed bitterly.

She could not know that it was a final farewell which they had just taken of each other; that they were destined never to meet again in this world; but the parting was every bit as painful as if she had known it.

She could not rid herself of the feeling that if she had never come to San Francisco to seek his aid, his future might have been a brighter and a happier one, and this thought caused her intense pain.

A week later, at the very time when Howard Montgomery was hurrying back to New York, in a desperate search for work and forgetfulness, she arrived at Saratoga, and took rooms at the Congress House.

She had telegraphed to Martha to dismiss the girls for a vacation, close the house, and meet her there; and the faithful girl was at the station waiting for her, and sprang eagerly forward to greet her as she alighted, weary and travel-stained, from the train.

She was shocked to see her beatiful mistress looking so poorly, but she quietly assumed all the care of getting settled in their rooms, coaxed Daisy into quiet and good-nature, and hovered around Cecile with such loving attentions that she began at once to experience a sense of comfort and relief.

The rest, the pure, bracing air, and the waters, seemed to be just what she needed, and she had not been there a week before she began both to feel and to look better.

She spent much of her time out of doors, thus gaining strength and an appetite, while already the old, beautiful, delicate tint was stealing back into her cheeks.

The day on which she had met with the accident of which we have before spoken, and when George Anthony had come to her aid, she with Daisy, and Martha, had been spending several hours in the Park wandering about in its cool, shadowy avenues, or resting beneath some shady tree.

"I think we will return to the hotel," she said, at last, to Martha, as the sound of voices warned them that people were beginning to gather for their afternoon promenade.

But Daisy, who was never so happy as when in the open air, was much opposed to this proposition, and instantly began to raise some forcible, if not musical, objections to it.

"Let me keep her, madam, until it is time to dress for dinner," Martha said. "I should like to stay, too, a while longer. The distance is not great, and I can easily carry Miss Daisy in my arms, if she is too weary to walk."

The good girl knew that her mistress would take a refreshing nap if left to herself; while, with Daisy running and chatting about, there would be no such thing as sleep for her.

"Very well; if you like to stay you can; but the sun and air has made me very drowsy, and I prefer to return," Cecile answered, and so went back to her carriage alone.

Martha watched her with a quiet smile until she disappeared from sight, glad to see something of the old, resolute light coming back to her eyes, and animation and color to her face.

And thus it was, while on her way to her carriage, that Cecile had stepped upon that rolling stone, turned her ankle, and fallen, and George Anthony had sprung to her assistance, and they together had afterward encountered Mrs. Langley.

Had Daisy been with her, her identity must have been revealed to the physician at once, and this would have resulted in the immediate reunion of the long-separated, long-sorrowing husband and wife.

But it was not so to be.

Fate had other work to accomplish first.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"ENTERED INTO REST."

THREE days after Cecile's departure from San Francisco, there occurred a fearful tragedy, which sealed the doom of a grand and noble man—which proved to be the summons that called Gregory Mortimer to leave earth's toils and cares, its pain and disappointment, and "come up higher."

He was returning from his office, after a wearisome interview with the numerous patients who crowded to him for advice during the hours which he devoted to such work, when, just as he was about to turn a corner, he saw a heavily loaded team coming from the opposite direction.

The street was very steep just there, and it was under such headway that it would have been very difficult to stop it under any circumstances.

A child, unmindful of the danger, attempted to cross to the opposite sidewalk.

Dr. Mortimer knew it would not do, and called to him to come back.

He did not hear or heed, and the physician sprang forward just in season to prevent his being run down and crushed beneath the wagon.

At that instant the wind caught his hat from his head and hurled it into the face of one of the animals. It was enough. Both brutes became frightened and unmanageable, turned short in their career, and the team was sent crashing back with cruel force against a lamp-post and the curbing.

The boy was saved; but Dr. Mortimer by some means became penned, and was driven backward and crushed between the heavy wagon and the post, and

when he was at length released he was thought to be dead.

No one can describe the feeling of desolation which settled like a pall over his heart as, after he had taken leave of Cecile, he returned to his rooms and found them so empty and forsaken.

He was a strong man, but the trial through which he was passing was no ordinary one, and the restraint which he had imposed upon himself for so long could not last forever, and he was almost ready to say, with one of old, "My soul is weary of my life!"

Two long hours he spent alone, shut into those rooms which the woman whom he had so hopelessly loved had occupied for so many weeks, and which seemed to him to have been almost sanctified by her presence; and no one save himself and the One to whom he took all his woe ever knew what transpired during that time.

But the "fashion of his face" was changed when he came forth.

He was calm, but he had aged visibly, and his eyes were hollow and sunken, although there was a look of resignation and patience in them, which told that he had accepted his chastening as from the hand of One whom he trusted and upon whom he leaned—it was a look of "Thy will, not mine, be done!"

As he opened his chamber door and came out into the pretty parlor, his foot came in contact with something lying upon the carpet. He stooped and picked it up.

It was one of Daisy's little shoes—a little blue kid shoe, worn, and soiled, and wrinkled.

His breath came quickly, like a sob, and for a moment it seemed as if his courage must fail—as if he could not bear his exceeding loneliness, or to think that he should hear the patter of her tiny feet or the sound of her sweet, childish voice no more.

But, holding it tenderly in his hand, he walked to the mantel and laid it where his eye would fall upon it whenever he entered the room; and there it remained,

until that suffering father came and carried it away, believing that it was all that remained of his lost darling upon earth.

When Gregory Mortimer came forth again he assumed his usual manner, and went about his customary duties with his habitual faithfulness and energy.

When, two days afterward, he was brought there helpless, bruised, and mortally injured, he knew that he should never go out again until they took him away to a long, last rest after his labors, his torn heart at peace, his sorrow and suffering all over.

Then it was that he realized that "God's way" was "best."

"I could not see it *then*," he murmured to himself, a strong, clear light in his eyes, a smile on his tender lips, "but now I *know*. It would have been cruel to have won her and then left her to battle with life alone again. Ah! yes, Cecile, you said truly. God will not let me suffer long—I *shall* indeed have my 'reward' very soon."

When, after an examination to ascertain the extent of his injuries, they told him that the end was very near, he surprised them all by calmly saying:

"I know it, and I am ready."

"I am ready!" Who can say it?

What glorious words they were! What calm assurance they bespoke—what trust—what a sense of work well done, of a life well spent, a heart and conscience at rest, and blameless in the sight of his Maker!

The supreme moment of his life had come, and he was "ready" to meet it.

It will come to us all—shall we be able to echo those sublime words that Gregory Mortimer uttered when he knew that the end was at hand?

"How long will my strength hold out?" he asked of a brother physician, whom he had sent for to attend him at this trying time.

"A few days—three—perhaps four," was the reluctant reply.

The calm light in those eyes did not waver as he heard it.

"Let my brother be summoned at once," he said, and then dictated the message, and gave the address to which it was to be sent.

"Now bring me pen, ink and paper," he briefly commanded, and it was brought.

With a steady hand he penned a brief but clear and legal will, and signed it in the presence of the other physician and Mrs. Lawson, who also affixed their names to the document as witnesses at his desire.

Then he asked to be left alone for awhile, and they, knowing that nothing could harm or help him now, gratified every wish.

Then, with a hand that was not quite so steady as when he had penned the will, he wrote a letter to Cecile.

It was like this—tender and considerate, and with an evident effort not to pain her by making any allusion to what he had suffered on her account:

"My Dear——:—I have that to tell you which I know will cause you grief, yet perhaps it will shock you less to learn it from me than from others. I have only a few days to live, having been mortally injured by an accident to-day. I will leave the particulars for others to tell you, as I fear my strength may desert me before I can say all that I wish. At present I am so benumbed by my bruises and injuries that I do not suffer much, and so I will give these precious moments to you. You were a true prophet, my friend—I am to have my 'reward,' and *now* I can see that 'God knew best.' But do not allow this to grieve you too much, dear—of course it would be hard to feel that you would not regret that we shall never meet on earth again. I know you will sorrow on account of it, but try to remember that I have only 'entered into my rest'—have gone where there will never be any more pain. But, Cecile, although *I* am dying, I cannot forget that *you* may live for years—I pray God to grant it for little Daisy's sake—but I cannot go in peace, knowing that you must toil on during the future, as you have done in the past—laboring with your

busy hands and brain for your daily bread. I told you once that I had no relatives save a brother. He is a very dear brother, but wealthy and childless; so, my friend, I am going to make—or rather I have already made—your little girl, your Daisy, my heiress. My will is written, signed and sealed, and given into the hands of a good man who will see that my wishes are fully carried out. You are to have entire control of the income of this fortune—some seventy-five thousand dollars—until Daisy is of age or marries. I know I cannot leave it in better hands, and with the knowledge that you will never need to toil any more, I can close my eyes upon the world and be content. Accept it, Cecile, for your child, as the legacy of a dear brother, whose greatest joy in life has been to have known and loved you; who, dying, clings only to you of all that is earthly. Farewell, my beloved, for a time; but in the eternity where I am going before you we shall meet again by and by, the pain of worldly disappointment all gone, sorrows all forgotten, mysteries all solved, in the light of an unending day of peace and joy and love. God bless you ever, is the dying prayer of GREGORY MORTIMER."

He was very weary after writing this letter, but he had still another to write.

This was to his brother, telling him of his condition, of what he had done with his property, and why he had disposed of it in the way that he had.

"She is the only woman whom I ever loved, Henry," he wrote; "she has been toiling nobly, bravely for herself and child; but I know that she cannot endure it long; she will break down under the constant strain, and her child will then be left motherless. I believe that you will cheerfully assist in executing my wishes, knowing that it makes me supremely content to do this for her—my Cecile."

It was the last word that he ever wrote—it was the last that he ever spoke.

Two days later, only a little while after the arrival of his brother, who could not reach him earlier, he turned

his face toward the western window, through which the setting sun was pouring a flood of golden, glorious light, and knew that his hour was come!

His eyes were still clear and steadfast, his face calm and placid, and as he watched that great ball of fire disappear from sight his lips relaxed into a smile, and he murmured softly:

"In heaven, Cecile."

Then with one long-drawn sigh his grand soul went up to God, the battle over, the victory won, and his reward attained.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

GLAD TIDINGS.

GREGORY MORTIMER had arranged all his affairs and "set his house in order" with a calmness and thoughtfulness which astonished all who attended him during his short but fatal illness.

He told them that he wished to be buried there, where he had labored and spent the strongest, busiest portion of his life, and where those who had known, trusted and loved him for what he had done for them might sometimes, perhaps, pass by and mark his resting-place, and thus keep his memory green within their hearts.

So they laid his bruised and mangled body in a lovely spot in the Masonic Cemetery, and the brethren of his craft left nothing undone which could testify to the esteem and affection with which he was regarded by them.

A rich but simple sarcophagus of granite, bearing his name and age, with the words, "Be ye also ready," marks the spot where he sleeps.

The only relatives who followed him thither were his brother and his wife, or the "beautiful lady who went away with him after the funeral," as the stupid servant had told Howard Montgomery, thus leading him to believe that Cecile had gone away with Dr. Mortimer's brother.

But there were many other sincere mourners, for the noble and skillful physician possessed a large circle of friends, who felt, when he was taken from them, as if their chief dependence had been removed, so greatly did they prize the wisdom and knowledge which he always manifested in his profession.

After all was over his brother faithfully helped to carry

out the wishes expressed in his will, and then left it with the lawyer whom he had employed to communicate with Cecile regarding the fortune which had fallen to her little daughter so unexpectedly.

Word was sent to her immediately regarding the death of her friend, his bequest, and also inclosing the letter which he had written to her.

But he had not known which hotel she had intended to take rooms in; therefore he had only addressed it to Saratoga.

Consequently, Cecile, who had no thought of hearing from him until after she had written to tell him of her arrival, and where she would stop, did not receive it until nearly three weeks after his death, it having lain in the post-office until it was advertised in the daily papers.

She had been obliged to remain quietly in her room for a few days after her accident in the Park, on account of the injury to her foot, which, although it was not badly sprained, was yet somewhat swollen and lame.

It was while thus laid up that she saw her name among the list of advertised letters.

She sent Martha at once to get the letter, and she was shocked and grieved beyond expression upon learning the sad news which it contained, and also greatly surprised that he should have made Daisy his heir.

The lawyer wrote all the particulars of the accident which had caused his death, also of the funeral obsequies, and closed by saying that he would await orders from her regarding what should be done with the fortune which had fallen to her child.

It was mostly in stocks and bonds, he wrote, and could easily be disposed of, or transferred to where she could more conveniently control it.

Over Dr. Mortimer's own letter Cecile shed many bitter tears. It was so tender and thoughtful, so resigned to the inevitable, yet hopeful for the future; and she doubted if she should ever find another friend so faithful and true. She *knew* she should never prize another as she had prized him.

And how kind—how considerate it was in him to provide so generously for her future—in such a delicate manner, too!

What her pride would have prompted her to reject for herself she could not refuse for her child; and yet she knew he had done this solely to obviate all necessity for future labor on her part; the income, entirely at her control, would place her in a position of ease and comfort, and she could give Daisy every advantage, without the slightest care or anxiety as to where she should obtain the means. It was an intense relief, yet obtained at what a sacrifice!

All day long she secluded herself, and gave herself up to the grief which she could not control.

It seemed terrible to her that a man like Gregory Mortimer—one so useful and capable of doing so much good in the world—should be thus tragically cut down just in the prime of life.

He had written of his approaching death as if he were merely going to rest after a day of toil and weariness, and was grateful for the release.

Yet those last words of his, which told her that his "greatest joy on earth had been to know and love her," and who, dying, clung only to her of all that was earthly, betrayed to her something of what his heart had suffered, and the knowledge nearly broke her own.

"How alone I am in this great, busy world!" she sobbed, with that letter folded tightly in her hands; "how almost everything and every one whom I have loved has been taken from me! Must I go on until the end, thus depending entirely upon myself, with no one to say a cheering or comforting word to me! Oh, Howard, where are you? Are you in heaven with him, or do you still exist in some secret place on the earth? If I could but go to your grave, as I can and shall to *his* some time, I could be more resigned; but this mystery, this uncertainty that is yet almost certainty, is too hard to bear.

"And yet," she added, remorsefully, "I have no right to murmur when my pathway has been so carefully smoothed

for me, and my child given back to me almost from the jaws of death. I will not complain; I will bear these sorrows patiently, taking them as reminders that it is not 'all of life to live,' and that those who 'mourn' here will 'be comforted' there."

While Cecile was confined to her room, and grieving over the loss of her best friend, George Anthony, in spite of Helen Langley's maneuvers to keep him at her side and out of harm's way, made a startling discovery.

He had occasion to go to the Congress House, on the very day that Cecile received her sad tidings, to meet a friend, who had lately arrived, on business.

He went to the office, where they had agreed to meet, but the gentleman was not there, and while waiting for him he began listlessly turning over the leaves of the register.

All at once his eye caught the name of Montgomery. He started, and looked closer.

"Mrs. Howard Montgomery, child, and nurse," he read, and their place of residence was given as New York.

His face paled.

"It is a singular coincidence—if it *is* a coincidence," he muttered, becoming quite excited.

He looked again, to ascertain the date of their arrival. It was three weeks ago.

An expression of disappointment clouded his face.

Perhaps, after all, they might not be there now.

"Is there a Mrs. Montgomery stopping here now?" he asked, turning to the clerk.

"Yes, sir," he answered, and a thrill went tingling through Dr. Anthony's veins.

"How old a woman is she?"

"Two or three-and-twenty, perhaps, and the finest-looking woman in the hotel, too, by George!" responded the voluble young man, who had an appreciative eye for beauty.

"The child—what is it?"

"A little fairy of a girl."

"How old?" George Anthony questioned, almost breathlessly.

"Between three and four I should judge. Know 'em?" the clerk asked, regarding him curiously.

"No, but—I know of them," he returned, while he could with difficulty control his excitement.

If this should indeed proveto be his friend's wife—if, after all, as the name upon the register indicated, she had *not* married that San Francisco physician—if the report that the child had died was, as he began to believe, a false one—what a revolution in Howard Montgomery's life would transpire upon its discovery.

For several moments he could not collect his thoughts sufficiently to know what steps it was best to take in the matter.

Should he seek an interview with this Mrs. Montgomery, and ascertain for himself if his suspicions were correct, before communicating with his friend? Or should he telegraph at once to Howard to come on and make his own investigations?

He shut the book and went out upon the veranda, forgetting entirely the business engagement that had brought him there, and sat down to think.

It was late in the afternoon, and the ladies and gentlemen sojourning in the hotel had begun to gather in the cool, pleasant place where the band would soon discourse to them delightful music, and where prettily dressed children were also running about, filling the air with their merry voices and happy laughter.

George Anthony eagerly scanned every countenance, hoping to find one which resembled that beautiful face on porcelain which Howard had once shown him, with those deep blue eyes, and crowned with lovely golden hair.

But no, it was not there; it would not have escaped him if it had been.

Over in one corner, at the further end of the veranda, however; there was a little group which attracted his attention.

A plain but honest-looking girl was sitting in a low chair, with some light work in her hands, while a lovely child played about her.

This little one was peculiarly dainty in her appearance, dressed in white, with broad blue ribbons, tiny blue shoes, and with a wealth of waving golden hair floating over her shoulders.

She seemed to be very fond of her nurse, for every few minutes she would run to her, throw her small arms about her neck, and put up her little face to be kissed.

George Anthony got up from his chair and began to pace back and forth upon the veranda, extending his walk a little further at every turn.

Finally he approached the spot where Martha—for it was she—was sitting.

As he came near he stopped and put out his hand with a pleasant smile to Daisy, who was now standing by the railing.

She glanced at him shyly but did not take the proffered hand.

"What is your name, baby?" he asked.

"No," she returned, shaking her golden head with some show of spirit, as if she disdained the appellation, "not *baby*, but *Daisy*."

His heart bounded, but his lips trembled as he said, benignantly:

"That is a pretty name, little one; but tell me your other—Daisy what?"

"Daisy Montgomery," she replied, hesitating slightly over the long word, as she always did, "and that is Martha," she added, pointing with one slender finger to the girl, as if she felt sure that he would take as much interest as she did in that very kind and useful person.

Martha was watching her little charge with a smile of pride on her lips, but she colored slightly as attention was thus drawn toward herself.

George Anthony bowed slightly, and then went directly to her side, determined to solve his suspicion at once.

"Pardon me," he said, courteously, "but whose little girl is this?"

"Mrs. Montgomery's, sir," she returned, respectfully.

"Mrs. *Howard* Montgomery?"

"Yes, sir."

"The same who returned from Europe in such trouble about three years ago?"

"Yes, sir," she repeated, wondering at his eagerness, and that he appeared to know so much about her mistress.

"Is she—could I see her? I am an old friend of her husband's."

He was nearly wild, now that he was convinced of all that he had suspected, to have everything explained.

"Mrs. Montgomery is ill to-day, sir. She is unable to see any one," Martha returned, with so much decision that he could not press the matter further.

"I regret to hear it. Perhaps she may be able to see me to-morrow," he said, bowing. Then after softly patting Daisy's pink cheek with a hand that still trembled with excitement, he turned away and went with quick, eager steps back into the hotel.

Five minutes later a message went flashing over the wires to Howard Montgomery in New York.

"Come at once," it said; "business of grave importance awaits you."

Howard, receiving it later, wondered, with a frown of annoyance, what his friend could want with him that he should summon him back to Saratoga thus imperatively.

It could not be that Helen was ill or in any trouble, else he would not have said "business" awaited him, and he knew of no one there with whom he had any business relations whatever.

He did not want to go; he did not like the gay place; he shunned society of every kind, preferring the solitude of his office, where he could indulge, unobserved, in his own sad thoughts, and where there was no necessity of assuming an indifference or cheerfulness which he did not experience.

But he did not feel at liberty to disregard the summons.

His friend might have become involved in some

trouble and need him, and he would be ungrateful, indeed, after all that he had done for him, to refuse to go to him under such circumstances. So to Saratoga he must return.

Had he but had the remotest suspicion of the glad tidings awaiting him he would not have moved about his preparations in such a languid, reluctant manner, inwardly fuming and fretting over the journey he was obliged to take, and the effort it cost him.

The wings of the wind would not have been swift enough to have borne him to Cecile, if he had known she was there.

But all things have their season, and it was not time, even yet, for that glad meeting.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE MEETING.

THE NEXT morning, after receiving the news of the death of her friend, Cecile arose much depressed. She had slept but little during the night, owing to the excitement and nervousness of the day before, while she felt that there was now no one in the world to whom she could turn in time of trouble.

"I do not believe there is another woman living who is so utterly alone in the world as I am," she murmured, as she listlessly made her toilet, and wondered how she could endure the long hours of that day.

Martha had told her of the gentleman who had inquired for her the day before, and who had appeared so interested upon discovering that she was there; but she had not paid much heed to the circumstance.

Even if he had been a friend of Howard's it would only pain her to meet him; she could not bear to talk about him with any one, for it aways opened all her wounds afresh whenever she spoke of him.

If he called again she supposed it would be uncourteous not to see him; but the thought gave her no pleasure, and she had not the slighest suspicion that he was the same person who had come to her assistance when she had fallen in the Park.

His intention had been to seek her again in the morning, and prepare her somewhat for the reunion with her husband, then meet Howard at the station when the train arrived, and take him at once to her; but

"The best laid schemes o' mice and men
Gang aft a-gley,

and so he was destined to be disappointed in carrying out his plans just as he wished.

Immediately after partaking of her late breakfast, Cecile donned her hat and mantle, and tying a vail close over her sad, tear-stained face, she told Martha that she was going for a walk in the park, and then went out.

She wanted to be alone; her heart was so sore with its burden of grief, and life, as she now viewed it, looked so long and so destitute of everything, aside from her child, to make it attractive.

She could not endure Martha's sympathetic glances, nor Daisy's merry chatter and play. She wanted to get away from every sound.

She sought a lonely portion of the Park, away from the more frequented walks and avenues, and finally found the seclusion she desired, and sat down upon a grassy bank beneath the thick shadow of some trees and shrubs, where she gave herself up unrestrainedly to her sad thoughts.

She had been there two hours, but had been so absorbed in sorrowful memories of the past that she was wholly unconscious of the lapse of time.

Weak and nervous from the loss of sleep, she could not stay the falling tears; she had no control over herself, and she wept almost constantly.

So oblivious was she to all things that she did not see a darkly-robed figure stealing softly toward her, or hear the cat-like footsteps which came hurrying to her side; but when a hand was suddenly and heavily laid upon her shoulder, she looked up with a startled glance, and found Helen Langley bending over her.

"You are here yet, are you? How came you here? What are *you* doing in Saratoga?" were the swift, fierce sentences which fell from her lips, while she regarded her with evil, glittering eyes.

Cecile's tears were dried in an instant now; her thoughts were rudely driven into a different channel, and she arose with an icy dignity which exasperated her sister-in-law almost beyond the power of self-control.

"I do not consider that I am compelled to account to Mrs. Langley for my presence in Saratoga," she said, coldly.

"Don't you, indeed! It might be well for you to have some regard for your reputation, however," Mrs. Langley retorted, hotly.

"My reputation!" Cecile repeated, astonished. "How can my being in Saratoga affect my reputation?"

"That is a sensible question, truly, when you are aware that I know you have no means to be flourishing in this expensive place, and that it is only as the particular friend—the *favorite* of Dr. Mortimer, of San Francisco, that you are enabled to be here at all."

Helen Langley regarded her with a keen, malicious look, as she made this outrageous statement.

A scarlet stain rose to the masses of shining hair which crowned Cecile's forehead at the unparalleled insult.

"You do not *dare* to charge me—the wife of your brother—with anything like that!" broke indignantly from her quivering lips, her pure soul aroused to arms at being thus assailed, while she confronted her dastardly accuser with a hauteur which took her somewhat aback.

She began to think that she had aroused a sleeping lioness this time; but she was so enraged to find her there—so exasperated at the danger threatening her and all her schemes—that she was reckless of both Cecile's feelings and her own language.

She would have been glad to leave the Springs herself, but she could not make up her mind to go and leave George Anthony behind, with the risk of his meeting her sister-in-law again, and having all her treachery discovered.

So she had determined to have an interview with Cecile and use all her arts to drive her from the place.

She had been lying in wait for her for several days for this very purpose, but, as we know, had been disappointed on account of her accident.

This morning, however, she had espied her on her way to the Park, and had followed her thither.

She had some difficulty in finding her, and had been almost upon the point of relinquishing her search for that day, when she caught sight of the slender black-

robed figure through the thick shrubbery by which Cecile was surrounded, and thus stole upon her unawares.

"Your assumption of virtuous indignation is exceedingly becoming," she retorted, scornfully, "but when a woman flies to a man as you flew to Dr. Mortimer—when she accepts his care and protection—living under the same roof with him—occupying his rooms, driving in his carriage——"

"Helen Langley, STOP!"

The interruption came like the report of a pistol, and startled the insolent woman almost as much as if it really had been one, and for a moment she was silenced by the authoritative command of the beautiful creature confronting her.

Cecile was as colorless as a statute of alabaster, while the look of horror with which she regarded Mrs. Langley was indescribable.

But Mrs. Langley quickly recovered herself; if she could crush her and drive her from her path she was bound to do it at any cost.

"No, I will not stop," she answered; "I have a right to denounce you for what I saw with my own eyes, for what I know from my own observation. Did the handsome doctor come to Saratoga with you?" she concluded, with a sneer.

"Dr. Mortimer is dead," came involuntary from Cecile's white lips.

Mrs. Langley looked blank for a moment after this startling information; but she rallied almost immediately, and remarked, mockingly:

"Ah, indeed! that is sad for you, no doubt, but I trust he left you handsomely provided for."

A moan of intense pain burst from the injured woman, and she leaned against a tree for support. She was appalled—almost benumbed.

Not only on account of this fearful aspersion implied against her own character and that of the man whom she had esteemed—almost reverenced—for his goodness and nobility, but for a sudden fear which took possession of her.

Would the world, when it came to know of her kind friend's legacy to her and her child, regard her relations with him in any such light as this?

Such a thought had never before entered her heart. So conscious was she of her own purity and integrity—so confident of his honor—that she had never dreamed that any one would so unjustly misconstrue his kind and thoughtful bequest.

She was so startled, so overwhelmed for the moment, as to lose sight of the fact that none but the most vindictive and malicious person—one who desired her ruin—would ever take such a view of it, or that there was abundant evidence to prove Helen Langley's vile insinuations false.

"It would be more to your credit, I think," she went on, following up the advantage which she thought she was gaining, "to keep away from a fashionable place like this, and to hide your head after the course you have been pursuing. At all events, you must know that it cannot contribute to *my* peace of mind to have you here, and live constantly in fear that the relationship which you once bore to me may be discovered."

Cecile recovered complete composure during this heartless speech, while the revengeful woman, with her vindictive insinuations, appeared too mean and contemptible to be worthy of her notice, or of causing her a moment's pain.

She would not have believed, under any other circumstances, that the sister of her noble-minded husband could be guilty of anything so entirely beneath a pure woman, or that she would allow herself to be so governed by spite and passion.

She lifted her small head proudly—she met with a steady, unflinching gaze the vindictive gleam in Helen's eyes, while her lips curled with an expression of ineffable scorn.

"If my husband had not *told* me that you were his sister, I never would have believed it," she said. "I find it difficult to imagine that one drop of kindred blood flows in your veins—he so noble—*you* so craven in your

nature. But if you object to residing in the same place with me, if you are fearful that our relationship will be discovered, there is one alternative which can be adopted, Mrs. Langley."

"And that?" began Helen, a passionate look leaping into her dark eyes.

"You can become a resident of some other place at your earliest convenience," was the calm rejoider.

"Do you dare stand there and reply to me with such insolence as that—*you*, almost a beggar!" was the fierce retort, although the arrogant woman winced as she pronounced that word, as she realized how appropriately it might be applied to *herself* just now.

Cecile's proud figure grew more proudly erect, and there was a haughty grace in her whole attitude that would have done honor to a queen.

A beggar!

How little Mrs. Langley dreamed of the snug fortune, with its handsome income, which she would henceforth control.

How completely their positions were reversed since their interview on that day before Cecile's marriage!

"Helen Langley," she began, with quiet scorn, "I dare stand here to defend my honor and purity before you, or even the whole world, if need be. I told you when we met in San Francisco that I would not bear much more from you, and I will not. If you persist in assailing me thus, I shall not hesitate to take vigorous measures to silence you. More than once you have used the term 'beggar' to me—it seems to be a favorite word of yours, Mrs. Langley, but it has not a pleasant sound—it is not becoming to one belonging to the 'noble house of Montgomery' to use so vulgar a term; besides it is not true, and I have the pleasure of announcing to you that I have the control of a very handsome fortune; yes—and it was a bequest from Dr. Mortimer. So you perceive, madam," and Cecile's clear tones rose to a mocking cadence, "that he *has* left me 'handsomely provided for;' but *you* know, as well as I, that your vile insinuations are entirely without

foundation, and if I should call you to account for them —as I surely shall if you do not let me alone—they could be disproved by abundant testimony."

Mrs. Langley opened her mouth to speak; but Cecile, whose courage was rising with every passing moment, and who felt more and more contempt for her, silenced her with an imperative gesture.

"I have but very little more to say," she said, "so pray listen without interrupting me. Do you know you impress me as being very cowardly in your nature, notwithstanding your boasted pride. No one who had true courage and nobility would ever assail a sorrowing woman as you have assailed me so many times; and now it seems to me to-day as if in some way you are afraid of me, and have assumed this abusive attitude in order to drive me to desperation and protect yourself from either some real or imaginary evil."

Helen Langley's face assumed a startled look at these words; but Cecile, appearing not to heed it, went on:

"However, I am digressing. I wished to say that with plenty of money at my disposal, I now have it in my power to bring you to justice for the abduction of my child.

"I would not like to have it said that a Montgomery went to war against a Montgomery; but have a care, Helen, for I am no longer a women to be trampled upon, and not even the fact of your having borne the name which I now bear will save you from my indignation if you continue to persecute me. I bore your abuse and insults before my marriage in silence, simply because I would not trouble Howard with them; I could not bear to shame him by exposing the littleness of his sister's character, and I never told him of it, nor of your cowardly note and threat on the day that we sailed for Europe. When I returned, alone, friendless, destitute, and in such deep trouble, I was obliged to endure your heartless taunts and scorn, and refusal to aid me, for I had no means of defending myself.

"What do you suppose your brother would say to you, Helen Langley, if he were living, and should know that

you refused even a pittance from his large fortune to support his wife and child?—that you strove to make me believe that he had cruelly deserted me, and tried to crush me by every means in your power? But your day is over; mine is just begun; and, when I leave Saratoga, I go immediately to New York to lay claim to my husband's fortune."

Mrs. Langley uttered a sharp cry at this.

Believing Cecile to be poor, she had never thought of such a contingency as this.

"You shall *never* do it," she cried, furiously. "You will not dare."

It would be the ruin of all her schemes, and would result in the immediate reunion of Howard and his wife.

"You have yet to find how much I can dare," Cecile, calmly rejoined; "I have not fought the battle of life for the last three years successfully for nothing. I have received some scars in the contest, it is true, but I have gained a strength and courage which has placed me beyond all fear of *you*. As for what you have said regarding my reputation, it cannot harm me; I shall not give it a second thought, for"—and here her beautiful face became almost glorified by the tender light which swept over it—"I have never for a moment loved any one save my husband; I have been true and steadfast to his memory; my heart is still with him, and I shall live my life to the end as I have heretofore lived—alone, save for the society of my child——"

"What! your child! Daisy! did she not die?" ejaculated Mrs. Langley, a look of startled fear blanching her face.

"No, Daisy did not die; I should have been too wretched to live myself in that case."

"But they told me she was dying; I surely thought she must be dead," Helen murmured, too astonished to realize fully the truth of the welcome tidings.

"No, Daisy is well once more; but, Helen, I hope we shall never meet again, for it arouses all that is in me of evil. Go your way, and let me alone henceforth, and

cast aside your suspicions—if they *are* suspicions, and not a malicious desire to injure me. I shall never marry any one; I belong alone to Howard for time and for eternity; and when life is over, and I meet him in the other world, *he* will know that I am, and always have been, true to him."

What was it that made Helen Langley start forward at this moment, with a half-suppressed shriek?

What was it that made her look as if some sudden and fearful judgment had overtaken her; that made her quake and shiver as if some icy blast had chilled her through, while she sank to the ground and covered her ashen face with her trembling hands?

Cecile, astonished to see her so terrified, turned to ascertain what had caused it, and found herself suddenly encircled by a pair of strong arms, and drawn close to a wildly beating heart, while her head was laid upon a manly breast, and her cheek wet with fast-falling tears.

"He knows it now," my darling," a broken voice murmured in her ears; "he knows it now; and, oh! my beloved, heaven itself could hold no greater joy than that of this moment!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

LIGHT BREAKS.

WAS she not in heaven? Was it possible for a person to be transported in an instant of time from the cares, vexations, and sorrows of earth to such fullness of joy as this?

Cecile did not faint when she found herself clasped in her husband's arms; she had not been guilty of that weakness once during all the years that she had suffered and toiled alone—not once since that day when she had arrived in New York, and every hope of ever seeing her dear one again had been extinguished.

But, although her senses were clear, and she had not been conscious of any sudden shock when she recognized him, and though she knew she was lying upon his breast, and he was raining tears and kisses upon her upturned face, and calling her by her every fond and loving name that had been familiar to her ears before she had lost him, yet she was powerless to move hand or foot.

She had been strong to face her bitter enemy but a moment before; she would have been strong to face the whole world and battle for her truth and honor, as she had asserted; but now, in the presence of this great joy, this blessedness which she had never believed would be hers again on earth, she was as weak as an infant, absolutely strengthless; and she could only lie there motionless, looking up into that fond face bending over her, and wonder:

"Am I not in heaven?"

"Cecile! my wife! why do you not speak to me? Have I come upon you too suddenly? Have I shocked you? I did not mean to; I promised I would approach you

gently, quietly, and not startle you; but I was driven wild by what I overheard. Oh, my darling! how have you borne it all?—for I have heard nearly every word that you have uttered. I crept near so still that you did not hear me, and stood behind the trunk of the tree yonder, to wait until George should break the news of my presence to you; but all my manhood has revolted against the revelation to which I have listened, and at your last words I could endure it no longer. My beloved, how you have been abused! how you have suffered! Speak to me, love!"

Howard Montgomery hung over his recovered treasure in an ecstacy of joy, which was yet mingled with something of alarm at her protracted silence.

But even at his bidding she could not speak; it seemed as if she had been rendered dumb in that supreme moment when the whole world became changed, glorified, for her. Her eyes never left his face—they lingered lovingly upon it, her starved heart feasting upon its dear, familiar lines.

She put up one white hand weakly and touched his cheek in a caressing way that had been habitual with her of old.

It was as if she were still questioning within herself whether he were really flesh and blood, or whether they had not met in the spirit rather than in the body.

The touch seemed to re-assure her. A sigh of infinite content parted her lips, and, like a tired child, she nestled closer to him, lying there satisfied, almost willing to die while his dear arms inclosed her.

"Howard—my husband!" she breathed.

Then, as if the effort had been too great, her white lids drooped, her hand fell helplessly upon her breast, and she lay as if she were dead.

"Anthony!" Howard cried, in a sharp tone of pain—"come here! I fear I have killed her with my thoughtlessness—my rashness."

Instantly Cecile's golden-fringed lids flew up again, revealing a radiant look in her azure eyes.

"No, no," she said softly, "there is no harm done;

only I am too, *too* happy. Let me rest a little longer and try to realize my joy!"

And George Anthony, who had sprung forward at the cry of his friend, was glad that he was not needed—glad to creep away again to hide his own red eyes and falling tears.

As soon as Dr. Anthony had deemed it proper, on the morning of these events, he had repaired to the Congress House again and sent up his card to Mrs. Montgomery, requesting an interview with her.

But the clerk returned, saying there was no one in that lady's rooms—she had probably gone out for a morning walk somewhere, as was her custom.

It happened that Daisy had slept very late that day, and at the time of his call Martha had just gone down into the dining-room with her to attend to her breakfast, and thus his call had come to naught.

He went from there to the station to await Howard's arrival, and he heaved a sigh of relief upon catching a glimpse of his haggard face, as the train steamed into the depot.

Going to his side as he alighted, he linked his arm in his, and led him directly across the street to the Grand Union, and up into his own room.

But he was half tempted to be provoked with him for the listless indifference which he manifested as to the object of his journey hither.

He did not even inquire what the nature of the business for which he was wanted might be.

It was plainly to be seen that he was still moody, absent-minded, and unhappy.

"Are you too weary from your long ride to listen to some news?" Dr. Anthony asked at length.

"No, I am not tired. Have you anything very remarkable for news?" he returned, without the slightest appearance of interest.

"I should say I have, man—man, what shall I do to arouse you?" George Anthony cried, impatiently. Do you suppose I should have sent for you in such hot haste

under ordinary circumstances? do you suspect nothing?"

"What should I suspect?" Howard asked, with a frown.

He was too miserable to enjoy mysteries.

"I have found her!" Dr. Anthony blurted out abruptly.

"Found her—whom?" his friend inquired, wondering if he was to be made the confidant of some love affair, but still without the slightest perception of the truth.

"Whom?" repeated the young doctor, almost savagely.

"Why, Cecile—Mrs. Montgomery—*your wife!*"

Howard sprang to his feet at this, as if he had been suddenly stung by some poisonous insect, while his already pale face became absolutely ghastly.

"*My wife!*" he exclaimed, bitterly, but in a hollow tone, while he gazed wildly at his friend.

"Yes, your wife; she is here at the Congress House, registered as Mrs. Montgomery, and that story about her going to California and marrying that doctor is all a mistake."

"It is *not* a mistake," sternly returned Howard.

"But, Montgomery, I tell you it is, for——" began Dr. Anthony, excitedly; but Howard interrupted him:

"No; for since leaving Saratoga I have myself been to California and ascertained the truth. The Mrs. Montgomery whom you have found must be another woman by the same name."

George Anthony looked blank for a moment at this intelligence, and wondered if he had indeed made a fool of himself by meddling with this thing.

"But—but no other Mrs. *Howard* Montgomery would be likely to have a child named Daisy," he began.

"Daisy—*my* Daisy is dead," Howard answered, with white lips, while he pressed his arm close over that little worn shoe which he always wore next to his heart now.

George Anthony's face brightened.

He was too sure of the truth of what he had discovered to be daunted by even such tangible evidence against it

as Howard's visit to San Francisco, and he went on rapidly:

"This Daisy is not, for I have seen her—a little golden-haired, blue-eyed fairy of between three and four years; and the nurse, Martha, also, who told me with her own lips that this was the same Mrs. Montgomery who returned from Europe alone and in trouble some three years ago. There has been some stupid mistake—your sister must have been misinformed. Are you crazy, man, that you will not accept happiness when it is offered to you?"

Howard began to look excited now.

It would surely be strange, if there were two women who bore the name of Mrs. Howard Montgomery, who had a child named Daisy with golden hair and heavenly eyes, and a nurse whom they called Martha.

Still he was so sure from what he had been told—from having found one of Daisy's shoes in the very room that had been Dr. Mortimer's—that Cecile had given herself to him, that the illusion could not be dispelled in a moment.

It might be that her own health had given out under the weight of this second sorrow—from grief over his death—and she had come to the Springs to recruit; and yet if such was the case it was very singular that she should have registered herself as "Mrs. Montgomery."

But his heart had throbbed with wild exultation at George Anthony's description of Daisy. Helen might have been mistaken about her death.

He seized his friend eagerly by the hand.

"It is all very strange," he said, hoarsely, "and I must know what it means. If what you say is true—if my *child* is still living—I shall be a new man! Life will still hold something for me. At the Congress did you say they were? Come!"

He threw his hat upon his head as he spoke and strode from the room, betraying eagerness enough now to satisfy even his exacting friend.

Upon reaching the hotel, Dr. Anthony again sent up his card to Cecile's rooms, repeating his request for an

interview, while Howard, with pallid face and trembling limbs, sat down by a window, with his back to the door.

"Mrs. Montgomery has not yet come in, sir," the servant said, upon returning, after having delivered the card and message to Martha.

"Is her maid in?" George Anthony inquired.

"Yes, sir."

"Send her here," was the brief command; for he, too, was becoming greatly excited as matters approached a crisis.

A few minutes later Martha entered, leading Daisy by the hand.

At the sound of the opening door Howard turned abruptly around, an almost wild light in his dark eyes, and he started forward with a low cry as soon as his glance fell upon his child.

Martha recognized him instantly despite his haggard face and emaciated form, and with a scream sank into the nearest chair.

"Mr. Montgomery!" she said, in a low, scared voice, and with her eyes glued to his face.

"Yes, Martha," he returned, but too much overcome to rise from his chair, "it is I; and is that *my* child?"

"Yes, sir, this is Miss Daisy;" and, rising, she led the little one to him.

"Darling," she said, in a coaxing yet tearful voice, "this is papa."

The child looked up wonderingly into his face, studying it with her wide, grave eyes.

Cecile had had a life-size picture of him copied from a fine photograph, and hung it in her pretty parlor, and as soon as Daisy could understand anything, she had taken her every day to this likeness and taught her to call it "papa."

Although he had grown very thin, and except for the look of pain in his eyes, the lines of suffering about his mouth, and the silver threads sprinkled among his dark hair, he had not changed so very much; and the child, drawn by some strange influence, perhaps by the

force of the great love in his heart for her and the filial instinct in her own, nestled close to his side, laid her little hand upon his knee, and said, gravely, but questioningly, as if she were wondering if that picture at home had not come to life:

"Papa?"

Howard's heart leaped to his bosom like a thing of life at the word, and he longed to clasp her to him in a close, passionate embrace.

But he restrained himself; he did not wish to startle her.

"Yes, my darling," he said, softly; "has mamma told you about papa?"

Daisy nodded her golden head two or three times, her blue eyes still regarding him thoughtfully.

He ventured to lift her lightly to his knee now, while he looked down upon her fair little face, his whole heart in his tender glance.

Daisy smiled at him, then, putting up one small finger, she touched successively his eyelids, his nose, and lips, saying, reflectively:

"Papa's eyes—papa's nose—papa's mouth."

"How does she know?" Howard asked, turning with surprise to Martha.

"Oh, sir! Mrs. Montgomery had a large picture of you made, and every day she has taken Miss Daisy to it and told her about you," the girl returned, brokenly, and wondering how her mistress would ever bear the glorious news of his return.

Something of the tide of bitterness against Cecile swept back from his heart as he heard this.

Whatever else she had done she had been faithful to his child, teaching her to know him, so that, now he had returned, he was not wholly a stranger to her.

"Will you kiss me, darling?" he whispered, bending his head until it touched her bright hair; he could not trust his voice aloud.

She put up her lips willingly and kissed him.

"Daisy kiss papa every day at home. Mamma kiss him, too, and cry," she said confidingly.

Howard could bear no more and preserve his self-control. He put his child quickly, though gently, down, while his face flushed a deep crimson.

"Why did Mrs. Montgomery go to California?" he demanded abruptly of Martha.

She looked surprised at the quetion, but replied:

"Because Mrs.—because some one had stolen Miss Daisy, and taken her to San Francisco, and she went to find her."

"What!" exclaimed both gentlemen at once.

"Yes, sir; some one carried her off one day, and Mrs. Montgomery was nearly deranged for awhile. At last something led her to suspect where she was, and she went all alone to San Francisco to get her."

Dr. Anthony and Howard exchanged glances of astonishment at this information.

"Who stole the child?" demanded Howard, sternly.

Martha colored, and looked down in distress.

She shrank from telling him that it was his own sister.

He repeated the question more severely than before.

"Oh, sir," she stammered, "perhaps—I think Mrs. Montgomery would prefer to tell you about it herself."

Howard's face grew cold again at this, and his suspicions were aroused once more.

Perhaps, after all, Dr. Mortimer had been the chief attraction in San Francisco.

"If you know, I wish you to tell me at once," he said, authoritatively; and Martha was forced to reply:

"It was—Mrs. Langley, sir. She wanted to adopt Miss Daisy; but her mother would not give her up; and so one day she found her sitting by herself in a store, where Mrs. Montgomery had gone to do some shopping, and took her away."

"Whew!" whistled George Anthony, who instantly began to see things in a different light from what he had done of late.

Howard Montgomery's face grew black with wrath.

Had Helen been playing a trick upon him, after all?

Had she woven all this cunning story for the sole purpose of keeping him separated from his wife?

It came to him all at once in one horrible flash. He remembered how bitter she had been against his marriage, how vindictively she had spoken of Cecile, telling him that he would be no brother of hers if he persisted in his folly, and "*never* to bring his beggar bride into her presence."

He never would have believed she could be guilty of such heartless and dishonorable intrigue as this! And yet, as he looked back he began to see that there were many points in her story which appeared unreasonable in the extreme.

Strange, he thought, that it had never occurred to him before; that he should have accepted everything that she had told him so blindly, and allowed himself to have been so duped.

"When did Mrs. Montgomery return from California?" Dr. Anthony asked, while Howard was busy with these thoughts.

"About three weeks ago, sir," she answered.

Howard's face fell again at this.

According to Martha's statement, she must have remained there a long time. Perhaps, after all, Dr. Mortimer would have won her if he had lived.

So prone is the loving, exacting human heart to torture itself.

"Why did she stay so long?" Dr. Anthony pursued, seeing the change in his friend's countenance, and surmising something of its cause.

"Because Miss Daisy was so very sick, sir. When Mrs. Montgomery first discovered her with Mrs. Langley, they thought she would die—she had diphtheria, and was constantly mourning for her mother; but a kind doctor—Mortimer—who was very kind to Mrs. Montgomery on the voyage from Liverpool, saved her, and they thought she would get well right away. But she took cold afterward, and was worse than before. One night they thought she was dying, and he saved her again. Just as soon as she was well enough to travel

he advised them both to come here for the water, for my mistress, sir, was nearly as badly off as the child, from her long watching and care."

Howard could scarcely repress a groan at this. He began to realize how he had wronged his faithful wife.

"But," Martha continued, "Dr. Mortimer has died since we came here. Mrs. Montgomery only received the news of his death yesterday, and she is feeling very sad, for he has been almost the only friend she has had during all her trouble. She says he has been like a brother to her."

"Where have you lived all this time, Martha?" Howard asked.

"In West——th Street, sir," she returned, with added color, and a curious glance at him, if she wondered what his next query would be.

"*How* has she lived?" he questioned, excitedly.

Martha's eyes flashed.

She bore Mrs. Langley no love, and she was not sorry for this opportunity of revealing something of her cruelty to his wife.

"By manufacturing fancy articles, sir."

"*What!*" he cried, aghast.

"Yes, sir. When we reached New York she had no money—not even enough to pay our passage, and was obliged to borrow of Dr. Mortimer. Then she went to Mrs. Langley for help, but she would not give it, and just the same as turned us out into the street. But Mrs. Montgomery sold some laces that she had to pay the doctor and give her a start. Then a gentleman gave her the lace-work to do, and she has done nicely at it ever since."

Howard Montgomery staggered to his feet at this point, his face nearly convulsed with mingled pain and anger.

What a dolt he had been to believe Helen's wretched falsehoods, or that the wife who had idolized him could be anything but faithful to him!

"Where is she now?" he asked, hoarsely.

"I believe she has gone to the Park. She loves to go

there, it is so cool and quiet. Shall I go and find her for you, sir?"

"No. I will seek her myself. Come," Howard added, turning to his friend, and they went together, the father forgetting for the moment that he had a child in his anxiety to find his wife, to clasp her to his heart, and beg her forgiveness for his distrust and suspicion of her by his blind belief in his sister's cunningly-woven lies.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

MRS. LANGLEY'S DEFEAT.

WITH a heart full of bitterness against his sister, and the author of so much of his misery, Howard hurried toward the Park at his quickest pace.

"She has played me false! She has done this to keep us apart, and to be revenged upon us for opposing her by marrying against her wishes; but she shall pay dearly for it!" were the savage thoughts of his heart as he strode rapidly over the ground.

In vain Dr. Anthony tried to induce him to be calm, telling him of the danger of coming upon his wife too suddenly.

"The shock to her nerves will be more than she can bear, if you are not careful," he said.

"You *know* that I cannot be calm. Could *you*, if you had wronged your wife, had you one, as I have wronged mine? *What* a fool I have been to believe one word that Helen has told me! I might have *known*, if I had stopped to think, that one-half was not true. But only let me find her!—only let me look once more upon her, and be sure that I have not been deceived a second time—then I will wait, and you shall go to her first and break the news to her;" and George Anthony was obliged to be content with this somewhat doubtful promise, while it was with difficulty that he could keep pace with Howard's impatient steps.

They wandered through the grounds for a long time before they espied those two black-robed figures which were half concealed by the thick growth of shrubbery which surrounded them.

As they quietly drew near they recognized Mrs. Langley, for her face was turned toward them, although she

did not notice them, she was so excited by what she was saying to Cecile. She had only been there a few moments herself when they came upon them.

Howard mistrusted the nature of their conversation; and, impatient as he was to meet his wife, he made up his mind that he would listen a few moments, and learn for himself just what their attitude toward each other was.

He made a sign to Dr. Anthony to keep quiet, and then crept still nearer, shielding his body from observation by keeping behind the trunk of a tree, and thus they heard nearly everything that passed between Helen Langley and Howard's fair young wife.

No one will ever know the conflicting emotions which he experienced as he stood there and listened to his sister's scorn and abuse of his loved one, learned all her treachery and wickedness, and heard Cecile's proud defence of her truth and purity, her love and faithfulness toward him.

He was surprised to hear of Helen's interview with her before her marriage, and of her note and threat on the day of their sailing for Europe. But when she attacked his wife's purity—when she mocked at her relations with Dr. Mortimer and at her poverty, calling her a "beggar," and found how she had kept from her, in her destitute and friendless condition, the income which rightfully belonged to her from his fortune, and realized how she had plotted since his return to ruin both their lives, he felt as if there was no retribution too dreadful to be hurled upon her.

It seemed as if every atom of affection which he had ever entertained for her died out of his heart as he listened; and when Cecile had declared "I belong alone to Howard, for time and eternity; and when life is over, and I go to meet him in the other world, he will know that I am and always have been true to him!" he could control himself no longer, and, thoughtless of the consequences, he had rushed forward and clasped her in his arms, his whole soul stirred to its utmost depths by her fidelity and love.

At first sight of him Mrs. Langley had sunk to the ground, overwhelmed with dismay, knowing but too well that all her schemes were brought to naught, her treachery discovered, and that ruin stared her in the face.

She saw, too, that Howard was accompanied by Dr. Anthony, and he also must have heard all that had passed between her and Cecile; consequently all her prospects of winning him and his handsome fortune were destroyed.

She could not understand what had brought Howard to Saratoga again just at this time, or what combination of evil circumstances should have led them to that spot at such an unfortunate moment.

She sat there upon the soft green grass, her head bowed with confusion, her heart in a perfect tumult of rage and disappointment over the failure of her plans, and listened to the fond, eager words which Howard poured into the ear of his recovered wife; and it can be imagined that a more wretched woman did not exist upon the face of the earth at that moment than Helen Langley, the heartless and arrogant but defeated foe of Cecile Montgomery.

George Anthony had been greatly surprised upon recognizing in the wife of his friend the lovely woman whom he had assisted only a few days previous.

He knew now why her face had struck him as being familiar; but he stole quietly away from the sacred scene, his own heart too full of emotion to admit of his retaining anything like composure.

As he went he cast one contemptuous glance upon the crouching figure of Helen Langley.

"That dream is over," he muttered, "and well for me that I was awakened thus early. How strange that one so fair, so fascinating and intelligent, so well calculated to shine in any sphere, should be so false at heart! What a perfect savage she was to Howard's lovely wife, who, by the way, is not lacking in spirit, either."

Cecile, lying in her husband's arms, clasped close to his throbbing heart, looked up into his eyes, which,

even in this supreme moment, still retained something of the sadness which had been crowded into the past three years, anxiously reading his face, which, despite the tenderness trembling there just now, was worn with suffering and lines of pain, that had been there too long to disappear in a moment, and noting those silvery threads so thickly sprinkled among his dark locks, and she knew that it was the work of something more than the mere lapse of time.

She gently raised herself to a sitting posture, a wistful light coming into her eyes, and folding her arms about his neck, she said, tremulously:

"Howard, something dreadful has happened to you—your face looks as my heart has felt during these long, cruel years, during which we have been separated; some fearful calamity befell you on that fatal day—tell me what it was?"

"Not now, my darling; the past seems but like some horrible nightmare now that I have you all my own once more, and I do not want to talk of it just yet," he answered; and she never knew how much of meaning was concentrated in those words "all my own."

To find that she had been so true to him after all that he had been led to believe of her—to be assured that her love had never strayed from him—that she was his alone through time and eternity, was almost more of happiness than he could calmly bear.

"Are you able to walk, Cecile?" he asked, a little later, while he gently lifted her to her feet, although he still supported her with his arm. "I want to go back to the hotel and to Daisy, and have both of my recovered treasures all to myself for the present."

"Yes, I can walk," she answered; and then her face grew luminous as she went on:

"And, oh, Howard! do you know that I think Daisy will recognize you? I have a large picture of you at home, and I have taught her to love it and to know that it is a likeness of her papa."

"I know," he returned, with trembling lips. "Martha told me, and I have already seen Daisy. I believe she

did know me, only I think she was puzzled to know whether the picture had not come to life or whether I was not some apparation resembling it."

And then he told her how George Anthony had discovered that she was there in Saratoga, had telegraphed to him, met him at the station, and together they had gone to the Congress House to find her, but instead had seen Martha, and she had related to them something of the past, and, telling them where she had gone, they had come to seek her.

"I cannot realize it, my beloved," he added, as he brushed the golden mist from her forehead and looked earnestly into her fond eyes.

"Can you not?" she asked softly; then added, almost solemnly:

"To me it seems like that calm—that wondrous sunset, after that day of storm and fear upon the Adriatic."

He caught her to him with something that sounded like a sob.

"It has indeed been a storm of trouble which has nearly wrecked us; how have we ever borne it?" he said.

"Let us trust that the 'future will brighten as it draws near.' Oh, my husband, God knows that in the joy of this moment it almost seems that I can forget the dreadful past."

"Let me go to Daisy, now," he urged gently.

He had found his wife; she was the same pure, beautiful woman whom he had always loved, and now his heart began to yearn for his child.

He left her for one moment, however, before they turned to go, and went and stood, white and stern, by his sister's side.

Her strength seemed all to have left her, and she had no power to move from that spot where she had fallen upon beholding her brother.

"Helen, I will see you some time during the evening," he said, briefly and coldly, and turned instantly away.

Then going back to his wife, he drew her hand within his arm, and they slowly wended their way back to the Congress House.

The remainder of the day was spent in rehearsing the strange events of the past three years to each other.

Cecile told her story simply and truthfully, without either reservation or embellishment.

She considered that it would be no more than just to herself that her husband should know all that she had suffered through Mrs. Langley.

He had heard enough to give him something of an idea of it, and she went over every event, keeping nothing from him.

He said but little, but his stern face and flashing eyes, as he listened to the wrong she had done his wife and child, did not promise well for his verdict upon the case.

Cecile told all the story of Dr. Mortimer's kindness, from the hour of their meeting upon the Britannia; of his promise to befriend her if she ever needed his aid again; of her appeal to him, in response to this offer, when she lost Daisy. She dwelt upon his devotion, his untiring watchfulness during her illness, and the delicate but successful operation which he had performed upon her, as a last resort.

And then, with flushing cheeks, but with her pure eyes never wavering beneath her husband's earnest gaze, she told him of this good man's love for her, and her rejection of his suit.

"It would have been wrong in me to listen favorably to any one without positive proof that you were not living," she said; then added, as she twined her arms about his neck and laid her flushed face against his:

"But, Howard, if I *had* known it, it would have made no difference. Day and night I was continually thinking and dreaming of you; my heart was full of love for you, to the exclusion of every other affection, except that which I had for Daisy. Every hour my soul longed for you, reaching out after you with a craving which would not be satisfied by anything save your return to me, or my being called to you. When I gave myself to you, my husband, it was no half-way gift."

And Howard Montgomery, looking into his wife's radiant face, was almost awed by the knowledge of her

devotion to him, and could not find courage to tell her how cruelly he had been led to doubt her, and to believe that she had forgotten him and given herself to another.

"I do not believe, Cecile, that the world contains another woman like you," he said, in grave, moved tones," "and I shall reverence Dr. Mortimer's memory as long as I live; he was one among a thousand."

"Yes," Cecile returned, tears springing to her lovely eyes, "and I mourn over his untimely death as I would for a dear brother; his was, indeed, a grand and noble character."

Then she showed him that letter which he had written her when he knew he must die, also the lawyer's, relating to his legacy to Daisy; and every doubt, every fear, every jealous feeling that he had ever entertained in his heart was given to the winds, and he experienced only gratitude and admiration for the man to whom he owed so much.

It was evening before everything had been explained and considered in all its bearings, and then Howard, remembering his promise to his sister, kissed his dear ones, and with a pæan of praise in his heart for the blessedness which that day had given him he left them for the painful task of calling his sister to an account for the wretched part which she had played in the almost tragic events of his own and Cecile's past.

CHAPTER XL.

THE BALL.

THE DAY on which Howard Montgomery and his wife were reunited was not a pleasant one for Helen Langley.

She had soon followed them from the Park, and shut herself in her own rooms, where she nursed her wretchedness and anger in solitude.

When Howard arrived in the evening she received him in sullen silence, and with something of defiance in her manner.

It was not in her nature to humble herself under any circumstances, and having wronged her brother, and hated his wife for so many years, she was not prepared in this first hour of her humiliating defeat to entertain much of anything but bitterness toward them.

It is always so where one has deeply wronged another, unless true sorrow and repentance soften the heart; a feeling of malice is cherished—a desire to do even a deeper injury, although that one may have been the faithful friend and benefactor of a life-time.

"There is but very little that I can say to you, Helen," Howard said, in stern, constrained tones. "I do not need to tell you that I know all of what you have been guilty, and it will be a long time before—if, indeed, I *ever* can feel kindly toward you again. You have abused my wife in the most cruel and contemptible manner, you have grossly misled and deceived me—have wickedly plotted to ruin my happiness to gratify a mean spirit of revenge. Had we not been reared together as brother and sister, I should almost be tempted to doubt that a drop of Montgomery blood flows in your veins—

as it is, it must have been poisoned before the hour of your birth, for none of our noble race was ever guilty of such baseness before."

"Howard, you are a sentimental fool!" she interrupted, passionately, her face crimson with anger at his words.

"That will do," he returned, coldly. "I did not come here to enter into any discussion upon the past, or to listen to any abuse from you. I simply came to tell you that henceforth—or at least until you betray a proper spirit of sorrow for what you have done—I do not desire to have any communication with you, more than is absolutely necessary. Furthermore, I can no longer extend to you the indulgence which I have granted since your husband's death and the discovery of your unfortunate losses. I will provide for you that you will not suffer—forgetting, as far as may be, your dastardly refusal to assist Cecile, when she came to you in such a strait after her return from Europe. I will settle upon you for life the annuity of one thousand dollars, which will give you every reasonable comfort. There will be a little—a *very* little, a few hundred, perhaps, coming to you after the colonel's affairs are all settled, and by practicing economy you will get along very well."

Mrs. Langley regarded her brother in angry consternation.

"Howard Montgomery, you do not suppose I am going to live upon a thousand dollars a year!" she cried, growing white with rage at the suggestion.

"I think you will be obliged to," he replied, quietly, "unless you do as Cecile did—invest it in some lucrative business which will yield you more."

The wretched woman was so mortified and nearly beside herself at this, that she could only sit speechless and stare at him.

"It is more than you deserve," Howard continued; "and while I know that you will not suffer—that the sum I allow you will serve to give you a comfortable living, I do not feel either willing or under any obligations to gratify any of your luxurious whims."

"But you *promised* me that I should want for nothing," she began, in a shaking voice.

"I know that I did," he interrupted; "but I supposed, when I told you so, that I was pledging myself to a true and loving sister, instead of a fiend in woman's form, who was even then seeking the destruction of those who were dear to me, and aiming a mortal blow at the very foundation of all my happiness. It will be well for you to leave Saratoga immediately. I will settle all your bills here, and you can use the check which I sent you day before yesterday to furnish yourself some rooms wherever you see fit to reside in the future."

"Are you not ashamed of yourself, to offer me, out of all your affluence, such a beggarly mite!" Helen cried out in a perfect paroxysm of anger.

Howard colored violently.

She had touched him in a very tender spot.

"The word beggar or beggarly seems to be a favorite expression of yours, Helen; you have not only *called* my wife a beggar many times, but you have done all that you could to *make* her one. I do not forget that in the midst of *your* affluence you drove her from your door almost penniless, when she did not know where else to go for shelter. When she asked you to lend her money to cancel her indebtedness to a stranger, you heartlessly replied, 'I will not loan you a dollar.' I tell you again, that I am almost led to doubt your kinship to me, for I could not have turned so coldly against the entreaties of my worst enemy had he applied to me in such distress."

"I could not forgive her for defying me and marrying you. The Montgomerys belonged to the aristocracy of Kentucky; they have noble blood in their veins, and have never before married out of their sphere," Mrs. Langley said, sullenly.

Howard's lips curled.

"Your ideas of aristocracy are very discriminating, Helen, and you have yet to learn the *true meaning* of the word," he said, scornfully. "While I am glad to know that I belong to a noble race, a proud old family

of wealth and high position, I would not wish to forget, for one moment, what it was that *made* them noble, and *worthy* of the high place which they occupied. They were ever generous and high-minded, disdaining everything that was cowardly or mean, cultivating kindliness and charity toward every one. Cecile, in the midst of her poverty, while toiling for her daily bread, was an aristocrat in a truer sense of the word than *you*, with thousands at your command, and surrounded by admirers and flatterers in so-called high life. I am prouder of my wife to-day, after the noble conquest which she has won over misfortune and your malice, than I should be to have wedded a princess of royal blood."

"And yet, in your boasted 'nobility,' and 'kindliness,' and 'charity,' you will drive your only sister into poverty and obscurity," Mrs. Langley sneered.

"You will do well not to try me too far, Helen, for doubtless you are aware that I possess a spirit equal to your own when once it is aroused," Howard returned, an ominous flash in his dark eyes.

"What I have offered you," he continued, "is all that my conscience will allow me to do, after the discovery of your treachery and wickedness; you will take it or you will get nothing. I will make it payable quarterly or monthly, whichever you may prefer; you can communicate with me by letter when you decide, as in your present state of feeling I have no desire for another interview with you at present."

He arose and left her without giving her an opportunity to reply, and returned to the more congenial atmosphere awaiting him at the Congress House, while the elegant and arrogant Mrs. Langley began to realize, in bitterness of spirit, that it was possible for even a "Montgomery" to become "a beggar!"

The afternoon of the following day she left in the most unceremonious manner for New York.

The next evening but one there was to be a brilliant ball at the Congress House, and Howard insisted that Cecile should attend.

"You have secluded yourself for so long—for three

years you have hidden yourself, and I cannot consent to allow *such* a light to be concealed under a bushel," he said, smiling.

"If I can only bring light into your heart and home, Howard, I care comparatively little for the rest of the world," Cecile answered, dropping her golden head upon his breast.

"But I naturally feel a little pride in my wife," he answered. "Remember I have never yet had an opportunity to introduce her to my friends in this country; and besides, the people here are crazy to see the heroine of our wonderful romance—the story has flown like wildfire, I hear."

Cecile looked up at him in dismay.

"I do not like to be conspicuous," she said, "and, more than that, I have nothing suitable here to wear in a brilliant company."

And she glanced down at her black dress.

"I should say not, if you wear such somber colors as this, all the time," he returned.

"I could wear nothing gay when my heart was so sad all the time," the fair wife murmured, with quivering lips.

Howard stooped and kissed her tenderly.

He wondered more and more at himself for having doubted her faithfulness for one moment.

"Well, the matter of a suitable toilet is easily arranged, I think," he remarked. "Get on your hat and we will see what the fashionable shops here contain."

"Must we go?" she asked, half pleadingly.

"Of course we must; we shall be taken by storm here in our rooms if we don't show ourselves," he said, laughing. "Come, I want the pleasure of buying something pretty for you; I have not forgotten our shopping excursions abroad, nor how dainty you were in all your selections."

The next evening, when Cecile entered the ballroom leaning on the arm of her noble-looking husband, it was hardly possible to recognize in that elegantly clad, regal-looking figure the pale, quiet woman who for so long

had lived in obscurity, and struggled so bravely with her sorrow for the sake of her child.

She wore a trailing robe of delicate blue satin, beautifully adorned with a profusion of rich lace, and looped with pale-pink crush-roses that sparkled with dew-drops.

Her golden hair was wound like a crown around her head, while a magnificent star of diamonds gleamed among its smooth, shining bands.

A beautiful cross of the same costly stones was suspended by a delicate chain from her neck, and these constituted her only ornaments.

Howard would have lavished more upon her, but she protested against it.

"I have so many and such elegant things already, that I do not need or wish any more," she said.

"But where are they?" her husband asked.

"They are stored away in a safety vault in New York—I was keeping them for Daisy; but now," she added, a brilliant smile wreathing her lips, "I shall be glad to wear them again for your sake."

But Cecile did not need costly gems or ornaments of any kind to enhance her beauty.

The light of renewed hope, and joy, and love shone through every feature, making her transcendingly lovely.

"You are a hundred-fold more beautiful, my beloved, than you were in the days of your girlhood, when I wooed and won you," Howard had said, as he wound his arms about her when she came from her dressing-room in all the glory of her rich attire.

"I am a hundred—yea, a *thousand*-fold more happy than I ever thought to be again. God is very good," Cecile murmured, tearfully.

They were the cynosure of all eyes that evening, and were pointed out as "that distinguished-looking couple" to strangers, who were anxious to see the hero and heroine of the thrilling story which had so suddenly become the theme of conversation among the fashionable sojourners at Saratoga.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE TIME HAD COME.

HELEN LANGLEY, wretched and humiliated, her proud, fiery spirit in hot rebellion against the ruin which had so summarily put an end to her brilliant career, hastened back to New York and took rooms in a quiet hotel on a retired street, hoping there to bury herself from the sight of every one until she could steady her shattered nerves somewhat, and decide upon some plan for future action.

But her punishment was not yet complete, as she was soon to discover.

One day, closely vailed, she went out for a short walk —for solitude and the companionship of her own thoughts were not so enjoyable as she had expected to find them—and just as she reached the private entrance to her hotel upon her return, she was suddenly confronted by the stately form of Selma, the octoroon, who twice before had intruded herself upon her so strangely.

After her last interview with her on the day of Cecile's return from Europe, when she had given her five dollars and been so disturbed by her visit, she had sent her work quite a number of times, and, finding that it was well done, she had recommended her as a seamstress to others, but she had never seen anything more of her until this moment.

There was something almost startling in the woman's appearance to-day, and Helen suddenly recalled the vivid impressions which she had experienced when she last saw her.

"What is it that haunts me thus?" she had said wildly. "Why does my flesh shiver and creep and my

heart quake before such a creature as that? I cannot understand it."

The time had come now, however, for her to understand it, and to her sorrow.

Selma's tall form was drawn to its fullest height; her remarkable face was stern and resolute in expression, and her midnight eyes glittered and burned as if from some deep inward emotion.

Helen started violently on beholding her, and a nervous thrill went shooting throughout her body.

She would have passed her without noticing her, but the woman, with a little closer setting of her lips, placed herself directly in her path.

"Well, what do you want now?" Mrs. Langley demanded, impatiently, and angered by her act.

"Work."

"I have given you work—all that I have to give," Helen said, bitterly, remembering how regardless she used to be of expense, and how powerless she was now to indulge in her extravagant caprices.

"I must have more—I need money."

Helen laughed, mockingly.

"Money! All the world is struggling for money, I believe; but I never thought much about it before," she said.

"You have lost yours," Selma asserted, with a keen glance into the brilliant, passionate face before her.

"How do you know? What is it to you if I have?" Mrs. Langley demanded, sharply.

"Hush, honey! dont't speak so loud—people might hear you," the octoroon replied, shooting a quick glance around; "but I know a good deal about you—indeed there is not much of your history that I do not know; and whatever concerns you is of considerable importance to me also."

"What do you mean? How dare you accost and speak to me thus?" Helen cried, vehemently, all her brilliant color fading from her face and leaving her almost ghastly, while those old familiar shivers began to chase each other up and down her spine.

"Let me come to your room, honey—I have something to say to you," the strange creature said, in a tone that was half a plea, half a command.

"What do you mean?" repeated her companion; "you are very forward. Who are you, anyway? Why do you haunt me?"

"My name is Selma ——"

"Yes, I know; but Selma who?"

"Selma *Montgomery*. I was once a slave belonging to one of the Montgomerys of Kentucky."

Helen Langley gasped, and caught at the railing of the steps near which she was standing for support.

She looked at the tall stately creature before her for a moment in speechless astonishment.

"Come," she then said, briefly, and turning, led the way into the hotel.

Selma followed her in silence, her great dark eyes fixed upon her with a mournful expression.

Upon reaching her room Helen locked the door, motioned her visitor to a chair, and then sank, pale and with a sense of impending evil, into another.

"Do you mean to tell me that you once belonged to some of my relatives in Kentucky?" she asked as soon as she could command herself sufficiently to speak.

"I was once the slave of Fitzroy Charles Somerset Montgomery, of —— County, Kentucky," Selma replied with startling distinctness.

"My father!" Helen exclaimed. "Selma—Selma! I never heard the name before. I never heard any one at home speak of you; and yet something about you has always affected me strangely."

The woman smiled grimly, but made no reply.

"Why did you not tell me this before?" Mrs. Langley demanded suspiciously.

"Because," Selma returned, straightening herself, her dark eyes flashing, "I was too proud."

"Too proud to ask aid of your master's daughter! You do not know the Montgomerys if you think they would be guilty of the meanness of refusing to help one of their old servants in a time of trouble," Mrs. Langley returned patronizingly.

Again the woman smiled grimly, while a hot flush went surging up to the dusky locks beneath the shabby bonnet.

"Tell me about yourself," Helen commanded, after studying her face for a moment. "You must have come North long before the war, or I should have remembered you."

Selma signed deeply; then, with a resolute expression hardening about her mouth, she said:

"Yes, I came North many years ago—long before you would be likely to remember me. My master gave me my freedom, and most of the time since I have lived in New York and supported myself comfortably. But I never lost sight of the old friends down in my Kentucky home"—it is impossible to describe the pathos of her voice as she said this—"for my heart was there; but when you married and came here to live, and young Master Howard also, I was more content."

"Did you know me—were you here then?" Helen asked, surprised.

"I know *everything* that has happened to either of you," the strange creature answered, almost passionately. "While I was able to take care of myself I could not come to you; but there came a time when I had a long illness—when all my hard earnings melted away like dew in the sun, and poverty and want came stalking in. I had not a penny when I came to you for work so long ago, and you gave me five dollars."

"If you had only told me that you were an old servant, I could have seen that your were well cared for," Helen again said.

Selma's eyes flashed once more; the words excited her.

"I could not—I had promised—I—but never mind," she began, confusedly. "You gave me work, and I was content—I could not *beg* of *you*. But sickness came again, and left me destitute a second time. You were away, and my only hope was to tell you about the past, and ask you to get more work for me, or help me to get into some place where I need not starve. I earned

enough to take me to Saratoga. I heard you were in trouble—that all your money was gone, and I thought perhaps you might be willing that—that I should come and live with you and help take care of you."

"But how do you know all this? Who told you that I was in trouble? How do you know that I need to be taken care of?" Helen questioned, hotly, her proud spirit rebelling against all this familiarity in one so far beneath her, yet not exactly knowing how to resent it under the circumstances.

"I was in the Park at Saratoga when young Master Montgomery found his wife. I heard all—I knew that you were dependent upon him; and when I saw you leave for New York the next day, I knew that he had cast you off."

"What business have you to follow me about like this? What right have you to pry into my affairs? I will not have it!" passionately exclaimed Mrs. Langley, with an angry stamp of her foot.

Selma's chest rose and fell spasmodically. Her face had grown pallid during this hot-tempered speech, and her lips trembled, while tears stood in her eyes.

"Because honey," she answered, humbly, "it was kind o' natural like that I should cling to the old family."

Again Helen eyed her suspiciously. Being so false-hearted herself, she had but precious little faith in the affection of others.

"I don't believe it—I don't believe you cling to us at all; there must be some other reason—some object you wish to gain. You have kept yourself out of sight all these years, and now, at this late day, you doubtless have some cunning purpose at heart that has caused you to reveal yourself to me," she said, a skeptical tone.

"I—I thought it would be hard, honey, for you to be left alone now. 'Pears like as if you'd like to have somebody about you, who—who loved you."

As the woman said this, with bowed head, and hands clasped tightly across her heaving breast, Helen Lang-

ley's ears caught the sound of rattling paper beneath her dress.

"Who loved me?" she repeated, scornfully. "There is no one on the face of the earth who loves *me!*" and her face was set and hard, almost repulsive, as she said it.

"Yes, yes, honey, *I* love you!—*don't* say that to *me!*" Selma answered, quickly, but with a muffled sob.

Helen gave her a puzzled look.

The poor creature's emotion appeared to be genuine, and if she was really what she represented herself to be, an old servant belonging to the Montgomery family, there might, after all, be a good deal of affection in her heart for the race.

"Why should you love me?" she asked. "I must have been but a mere baby when you came North."

"Yes, a little baby—a wee, black-eyed, lovely little girl, only a year old," Selma breathed, tenderly.

"Were you my nurse?" Helen questioned, thinking perhaps that might account for her strange attachment.

"Yes, honey; you slept in my arms, you rested on this bosom day and night for a whole year. Selma was never away from you a single hour; and I loved you, Miss Helen, as if—as if——"

A stifled sob finished the impassioned sentence, and again her wondering listener heard the sound of crumpling paper beneath those tightly clasped hands.

"Why did you leave me, then, if you loved me so? I should have supposed that freedom would have been no temptation," she answered, a bitter smile on her lips, a mocking cadence in her sharp tones.

Selma drew herself up proudly at the tone and strove to regain her composure, while her face again flushed hotly.

"Master *offered* me my freedom, and—and one could hardly refuse a—a gift like that," she returned, somewhat brokenly, but with such evident confusion that Helen felt her suspicions, which had been allayed during the last few moments, revive again.

"My father *offered* you your freedom?"

"Yes, honey."

"Then you did not *run away?*"

"No, Miss Helen," and she shuddered, as if the thought gave her infinite pain.

"That is strange! I do not understand it. Masters were not in the habit of freeing their slaves in that way, and—and you must have been quite a valuable servant," Helen returned, with another keen glance at the still handsome face and stately form of her companion.

"I was—was a—a—favorite, honey," Selma stammered.

"All the more reason why they should wish to keep you," Helen answered; then asked:

"Did my father give you free papers?"

The woman gave a queer look, which puzzled Mrs. Langley still more; but she answered:

"Yes, honey."

"Where are they?"

"I have them here," she said; taking a folded paper from her bosom; and Helen knew now what had caused that rattling sound in her bosom.

"I was afraid you would not believe me, honey," Selma went on, speaking rapidly, "and I do so want to come and live with you. You will have to give up your fine servants now that you are poor; but old Selma will come and serve you faithfully, if you will let her, and ask for nothing but the crust she eats. I knew the free papers that master gave me would prove to you that what I say is true, and so I brought them to show you. Ah! honey, it would do my old heart good—it would make it young once more—to serve a Montgomery again. I can read and write, I can sew—I could make all your dresses, honey, and that would save you a power of money—I can wash, iron, and cook. There is *nothing* I would not do for *you.*"

Helen regarded her with astonishment.

Her old face was lighted up into positive beauty in her earnestness. A bright flush had settled upon either cheek, her eyes glowed with an eager light, and a tender smile hovered about her lips.

Surely, she thought, there must be something of real affection left in the world if, after so many years' separation, a servant could cling to her master's family like this.

"Let me see the paper," she said more gently than she had yet spoken, but ignoring entirely the earnest pleading of the woman.

Selma approached and laid the folded document on her lap; but the light had faded from her eyes, the smile had frozen on her lips at being treated so coldly.

Mrs. Langley unfolded it and began to read.

At first a look of astonishment came over her face; then, as she read on, she seemed suddenly turned to stone, and grew so white that, but for her staring eyes, her dilating nostrils, and convulsed face, one would have believed her to be dead—petrified where she sat.

But all at once the paper dropped from her nerveless fingers, and there rang through the room a shriek as of one in mortal agony.

The next moment she lay stretched upon the floor in a deadly swoon.

CHAPTER XLII.

CHILD OF A SLAVE.

AS MRS. LANGLEY fell to the floor, Selma, with an answering cry of terror, sprang to her side and raised her in her strong arms.

The stern control which she had exercised throughout the interview over herself seemed to give way entirely, now that Helen had become unconscious.

She clasped her close to her breast; she bent down and wildly kissed the still, white face again and again, calling her fond and tender names, and rocking to and fro, as if she had suddenly been converted again into the infant which she used to cradle upon her bosom so long ago.

But at length she began to realize the necessity of doing something for her relief, and laying her gently down upon the floor once more she went into the chamber adjoining and brought out a bowl of water, with which she began to sprinkle her face vigorously.

It was some time before Helen began to show signs of reviving, notwithstanding that Selma did everthing possible for her.

But at last her dark eyes unclosed, and with a deep-drawn sigh she looked wildly around the room.

When her glance fell upon the woman kneeling by her side, she realized with a violent start all that had transpired.

She sat up, the wild look returning to her eyes, and pushing Selma from her with what little strength she had she began moaning and wringing her hands in the most piteous manner.

At first the octoroon regarded her anxiously, and seemed at a loss to account for her excessive agitation.

Then her eye fell upon the paper which she had given Helen, and, with a frightened look suddenly leaping to her eyes, she bent forward and picked it up.

Taking her glasses from the top of her head, she adjusted them to her eyes to examine it.

One glance appeared to be sufficient, for she almost instantly cast it from her with a cry almost as terrified as the one Helen had uttered, and dropped again upon her knees beside her in deepest distress.

"Oh! forgive me—honey, forgive me!" she cried, tremblingly. "*I have brought you the wrong paper!* I never meant that any one should ever know that I had it. Oh! why was I so foolish as to keep it?—why did I not destroy it, and save the misery of this moment? I would a hundred times rather have died alone in poverty and distress than to have brought this added sorrow upon you! Honey, forgive me—say that you forgive old Selma, who is a thousand times more wretched than yourself at this moment!" and bending her proud head to the floor, she moaned as if she were indeed in mortal distress.

Again Helen put out her hand to push her away.

"Go out of my sight—I hate you! *I hate you!*" she cried, with colorless lips and a shudder of repulsion.

Without a word the wretched creature got up from her humble position and crept away into a corner, where she sat with her arms clasped around and her head bowed upon her knees; while long-drawn sighs burst now and then from her overcharged heart.

Nearly half an hour elapsed, and there was no other sound in the room.

Mrs. Langley sat in the middle of the floor like a statue, apparently stunned and regardless of everything.

At last she dragged herself to a chair, picking up as she went the paper which Selma had dropped again after reading.

For a long time she sat holding it in her hand, while shudder after shudder shook her graceful form; then, as if she had been summoning all her courage for the task, she began to read it again.

Looking over her shoulder, we also will see what it contains:

"I, Fitzroy Charles Somerset Montgomery, upon receiving the written promise of Richard Sussex, my half-brother, that he will leave the country and never return to remind me of what has this day transpired between us, do hereby pledge my word that I will adopt and rear as my own his child and that of my servant Selma. She shall be called Helen Montgomery, and it shall never be known through any act of mine that she is not my own offspring. She shall share equally with my own children —should I ever have them—in what I possess, and become my heiress in case I should die childless. Signed,

"FITZROY CHARLES SOMERSET MONTGOMERY."

[Copy.]

It is no wonder that the proud heart of the brilliant woman of the world should be crushed after reading this wonderful document.

It was not strange that the sun seemed suddenly to have been blotted out of the heavens, and every bright and beautiful thing in life to have been withered and blighted by this lightning-stroke.

It was the very gall of bitterness to this fiery-hearted Southerner, who hitherto had believed herself to belong to the very *creme de la creme* of society, to discover that she had simply been lifted "out of the depths" by a freak of fortune—that she was in reality only the *child of a slave* —that the tainted blood of the South, and *not one drop* of that of the noble race of Montgomery, upon which she had so prided herself all her life, flowed in her veins.

Where now was her boasted superiority over Cecile?

There was indeed no kinship between her and Howard, the noble and high-minded man, whom she always believed to be her brother, and who was the only representative of her race.

She who had grown up fondly dreaming herself to be an "aristocrat of unimpeachable birth and family," one whom nothing of evil could ever touch or hurl

from her proud position, to find, after all, that she was but the offspring of a bondwoman who had been made the toy of an ignoble man—the plaything of a traitor in the house of his brother!

She knew that such things had transpired in the South—that they had added dishonor to an already disgraceful and unholy institution; but that such a thing could be said of *her*—that *she* should be the victim of such sin and shame had never occurred to her.

"Where did you get this paper?"

Selma started violently as the hollow tone smote her ear, it was so unnatural, so hopeless.

"I took it from master's private desk the night before I came away," she answered without lifting her bowed head.

"What right had you to take it? How did you dare take it?"

"I had no right," the woman answered, humbly, "but I did it for *your* sake. I never could rest, knowing that it existed—I was afraid that sometime it might be found and that you might discover the truth; and to think that after all *I* should be the one to blight your life with the revelation!" she concluded with a groan.

Helen made an impatient movement as if her suffering galled her.

It made her realize more fully their relationship to each other.

"How did you know that there was such a paper?" she asked.

"I could not help knowing—it was a dreadful time," Selma answered, with a shiver.

"Begin at the beginning and tell me everything," Mrs. Langley commanded, but with asken lips.

Selma lifted a face almost as colorless as her own at this.

"It would be better for you never to hear it; I would rather have died than live to tell you the truth," she said.

"Tell me," was the brief but imperative reply.

With her elbows resting upon her knees, and her in-

terlocked hands clasping her forehead, Selma began her thrilling tale.

"I am about the age that Master Charles would have been had he lived, and was reared with him and his sisters on the old plantation in Kentucky. I was called very smart and bright, as well as handsome, and was much petted by the whole family, and being quick to learn, they allowed me to study with the children and recite to their governess. Thus I grew up to be more of a companion than a servant. Old Mrs. Montgomery had been married before, and had one son—Richard Sussex—who was some three or four years older than Master Charles. They both resembled their mother, were dark and handsome, and looked very much alike, although they were only half-brothers. Richard had a desire for a military life, and as soon as he was fitted for it he was sent away to West Point. He was very fond of me as a child, and was always ready to assist me with my lessons, and I experienced a gratitude and affection for him that amounted almost to idolatry.

"We did not see much of him for several years, for he spent most of his vacations North, and after he graduated he was ordered away for a year or two on some duty. When Master Charles was married I became half companion, half lady's maid to his wife; but I was never treated as a servant—never made to feel that I was a slave. It would have been far better for me if I had," Selma said, with a sigh of pain.

"Go on," Mrs. Langley interposed, with a frown. She could hardly wait to hear the rest; every word was torture, but she was determined to know the whole truth.

"I was twenty-two years old when Richard returned to spend a furlough with his brother. Master Charles had only been married a short time then, and the house was very gay with company, and no one seemed to notice how much Richard talked and jested with me. He sought me continually; he paid me flattering compliments, as if I had been his equal, and made me handsome presents; while I, in my vanity and ignor-

ance, received it all with delight, and allowed my old affection for him to revive, believing all that he told me about my beauty and intelligence, until he had charmed me as the serpent charmed the fluttering, delighted bird that it marked for its prey. When he went away the world sudddenly became a blank to me; I lost all interest in everything, became careless about my duties, peevish and irritable in disposition.

"When, some time later, I was obliged to confess to my mistress my own folly and the treachery of her husband's brother, there was a tempest in the family such as one would not care often to see. Master Charles sent for his brother, and fierce, sharp words passed between them. I crept into a closet in the room adjoining and listened, determined to know what was said about me.

"'The girl is handsome and well educated—no one would ever believe she has a drop of black blood in her veins; take her away where she will not be known, and do the right thing by her,' I heard Master Charles say.

"'What do you mean?' Richard demanded, in a sharp, angry voice.

"'Marry her. I will give her to you; she is more like a sister to us both than a slave.'

"'Marry a d——d nigger!' shouted Richard; and he added that he would see Master Charles in a very bad place first; and he instantly left the house in a passion, without even one kind word or look for me.

"A week later my mistress, who was not well, was ordered to go North for awhile, and it was decided that I should accompany her.

"We went to a quiet little village among the Adirondack Mountains, and there my child was born three months later.

"She was a lovely little girl, with black hair and eyes, and the very image of Richard Sussex. My mistress was delighted with her, and made much of her, although she would look very sad at times when she sat holding her in her arms.

"A month after, she gave birth to a dead child, a boy,

and her heart was almost broken. After a few days, when she became a little more calm, she directed me to write for my master to come on immediately, and a week later he arrived in answer to the summons. My mistress bade me go out soon after he came, saying I might leave my child with her. I do not know what occurred during that interview, but when I was called to take my baby they both looked very grave and troubled, and Master Charles went immediately out to post a letter that he had been writing. The day but one following Richard Sussex came in suddenly, as I sat in our little sitting-room rocking my baby to sleep. He started as he saw me, nodded and turned away, but not before I had seen how pale his face had grown as his eyes fell upon the sleeping child.

"'Where is your master?' he asked, without looking at me.

"I could have killed him for speaking those cruel words, which reminded me that I was a slave, and made so apparent to me the difference in our position.

"I pointed to the bedroom without answering a word, and he went in and shut the door.

"My mistress was able to sit up now, and those three held a long consultation, and I heard it. I knew by instinct that it concerned me and my child, and I was determined to know all that transpired.

"'I never can consent to own as a slave any one in whose veins a drop of kindred blood is flowing,' I heard Master Charles say, as, after laying my baby down, I glided to the door to listen. The child bids fair to be very lovely, and surely *you* would not wish her raised as a servant.'

"'I do not see how I can very well help it,' Richard replied in a sullen tone.

"'Man, what are you thinking of? I would not have believed you so heartless,' exclaimed my master, indignantly.

"'I am not heartless! If the girl had been free and white I would have married her outright,' was the confession which set my heart bounding with delight.

"'Then you really did love her after all,' my mistress interposed, quickly.

"'So well that I shall never love any one else probably as long as I live.'

"'Then why not cast pride to the winds and do what I have proposed? Take her abroad where no one will ever know—she is capable of occupying almost any position—and then you will be able to rear and educate your child as becomes one of your blood.'

"'It is impossible. Some one would be sure to discover it. I am surprised that you, a *Southern gentleman*, could propose such a measure. But if you will give them both to me, or sell them to me, I will take them away, and they shall have everything in the future which money can provide.'

"'Do you think I would consent to anything like that?' Master Charles exclaimed, indignantly. 'Do you think I will allow any more of such wrong as you have already committed? How would you account to your child, when she should become a woman, for her parentage and your relations with her mother? No; if you will not do as I wish, I have still another proposition to make to you. We have lost the little one whom we hoped God would give us, and if you will consent to leave the country, or go away somewhere, and never seek to see or make yourself known to this child, we will adopt her as our own in place of the one we have lost. No one yet knows of either birth. We sent Selma North, hoping to shield her as well as you from the results of your folly, and if we take the little one back with us as our own, no one will ever need to know but that she really belongs to us. But you must give me your written promise never to hold any communication with either Selma or the child, and I, in turn, will pledge myself to make her an equal sharer with my own children, should I have them, in whatever I may leave at my death.'

"'Yes, I will consent to that,' Richard replied, after a long pause. 'I do not like the idea of never returning to my own home again, but I suppose it would not be

pleasant for you to see me after my unfortunate escapade. But if you do as you have proposed it will be a heavy burden off my mind, for it *would be a cursed shame* to have the child brought up as a—slave.'

"The paper that you have there, Miss Helen," Selma went on, "was written and signed there, as was also a promise from Richard, which I never saw; and when we went back to old Kentucky my child went as little Miss Helen Montgomery, and no one ever knew of the secret which we three held locked within our hearts.

"One day my mistress came and told me that my master wished to see me. I went with fear and trembling, for I mistrusted some trouble was coming to me.

"He told me that I was to stay with Miss Helen until she was a year old; then he would give me my freedom upon condition that I, too, would go away and never seek to see her again. In vain I promised on my knees that I would never breathe a word to betray my secret, and told him that I did not care for my freedom so that I could stay with my child.

"'You love her too well already,' he said; 'besides, *we* know that you are her mother, and we do not wish to be constantly reminded of the fact by your presence.'

"And so it was settled, for there was no appeal from his will. I remained the year out, growing to love you more and more, and driven nearly wild with the thought of parting. But the day came at last, and my master brought me my free papers, and a hundred dollars—'to give me a start somewhere,' he said—and I came immediately to New York.

"As I told you before, however, the night previous to my departure I went to Master Charles' private drawer—for I knew where he kept his keys—and stole that paper, hoping thus to remove all evidence that you were not his child from all possibility of discovery by you or any one else. For many years I lived in and about New York in the capacity of lady's maid, and earned a good living; but every fall I stole back to my old Kentucky home, to take one look at the child whom I could never forget nor cease to love. On my second visit there I

found that another child had come to share in the love which had hitherto been lavished wholly upon mine. It was a beautiful boy, with dark eyes and hair, a clear, bright complexion, and strangely resembling you.

"Thus you grew up together, and no one ever knew that you were not own brother and sister. When my master died, and I found that he had faithfully kept his pledge that you should share equally with his own—when I saw how beautiful and brilliant and admired you were, I felt that my sacrifice had been well repaid.

"But when I heard of your husband's death, and that you had lost all your money—when, on following you to Saratoga, hoping to win my way as a servant to your constant presence, I found that even your supposed brother had cast you off, all my old affection revived for you. I thought perhaps you might make a quiet home somewhere and let me be your servant. I knew no one would be as faithful as I, and so, to win my way to your sympathies, I thought I would bring you my freedom-papers to prove that I had once belonged to your family. It was in a box with this pledge, and I supposed I had brought the right one; but my eyesight has failed of late, and so I have made this blunder, which has told you a secret which I would rather have died than reveal."

"Where is Richard Sussex?" Helen Langley demanded, as Selma concluded her wonderful story.

"Dead. He died in South America fifteen years ago. I never saw him after that day, when he came to us in the Adirondacks."

"Then there is no one living who knows this fearful thing save you and myself."

"No, all are dead—and, oh! that I could have died, too, before this wretched hour!" moaned the unhappy creature.

A savage gleam shot into the younger woman's eyes at this; it was as if in her heart she wished so, too.

"Then perish all evidence of it forever!" she said, hoarsely, as she took the paper and tore it into bits.

Then, rising, she went and threw them into the grate, where they were instantly consumed to ashes.

Then she turned white and stern to Selma.

"You can go now," she said, coldly.

Selma looked up at her with piteous eyes, and a face as colorless as parchment.

"Can you never forgive me?" she pleaded, while she struggled to her feet and came and knelt before the proud woman.

"No, never!" was the cruel, almost fierce, response.

"Oh, do not say that!" she moaned. "Do not banish me entirely from you. I will be your servant—you can command me in any way—I will faithfully obey your lightest behest, and never remind you by look, word, or act of ——"

"Enough!" Helen interrupted, with a shiver, while she waved the poor creature from her with a gesture of repulsion. "Go now; but, if you choose, you can come again to-morrow, and I will talk further with you about the future."

Painfully, and without another word, Selma struggled to her feet and tottered from the room.

Helen Langley sprang forward and locked the door the instant it closed behind her, and then, her power of self-control all gone, she became for the time like one insane.

It is useless to try to describe the tornado of passion, and shame and humiliation that swept over this proud woman's soul at this last fearful revelation.

Suffice it to say that when another day dawned, the once haughty and elegant Helen Langley looked as if a score of years had passed over her, leaving their ravaging marks behind.

Her face was wan and wrinkled, her eyes sunken, and surrounded by dark, unsightly rings; her once abundant hair, so rich and dark, was thickly sprinkled with threads of silver, and her proud bearing forever gone.

What passed between her and Selma the following afternoon was never known, save to themselves, but after communicating several times by letter with How-

ard, "Mrs. Colonel Langley and her servant," as the papers had it, sailed one day for Europe, and that star dropped forever out of the social world of New York, where for many years it had shone with such effulgence.

Ten years later there appeared a notice of her death in one of the New York papers.

She had died in Paris, and was buried there.

Selma, old and feeble, retired to a "home for the homeless" in the city, and when at length she knew that her end was also near, she begged to be laid at the foot of the lot where they had burried "her mistress," and the child to whom she had been so faithful during all the sad years of her life.

Back to Saratoga we must now go for one brief review of the actors we left, and the events transpiring there.

Howard and his fair wife remained several weeks after the departure of Mrs. Langley, although the season was about over at that time, and the gay visitors nearly all gone.

The air and water appeared to be so beneficial to both Cecile and Daisy that Howard deemed it best for them to remain there until he could prepare a new home for them in New York.

He went back and forth every day, superintending it, and under the influence of his recovered happiness he, too, was improving almost as rapidly as they.

When they were at length settled in their beautiful residence, on one of the fashionable avenues of the city, Cecile one day asked Martha what she could do for her for all her faithfulness to her during the past.

"Let me stay with you and take care of Miss Daisy just the same as I have done," she answered with starting tears, while she hugged the child close to her heart.

"But you came to America in search of your fortune, you know," Cecile replied, smiling, yet touched by this evidence of the girl's affection for her. "I thought if you liked, I would settle my little business upon you, help you about your patterns, and you could make money much more rapidly in that way."

"You are very kind, marm, but I should be lonely,

and—I would rather make less money and stay with you, if—you want me," Martha answered, rather wistfully.

"Of course I want you, you good girl; and I believe Daisy would almost break her heart without her kind Martha, only I wanted to do as well as possible by you."

So the little business by which Cecile had kept the wolf from the door for three long years was disposed of to some one else, and Martha retained as a favorite servant, until one day a handsome lad from "Bonnie Scotland" came in search of her, and she "went awa' wi' him," to a pretty little home of her own, which Daisy and Daisy's mother made as attractive as possible for her.

George Anthony henceforth devoted himself to his profession. He discovered that, after all, he was "not a marrying man," and always gave a wide berth to all beautiful widows in the future, warned by his experience with Helen Langley that appearances are often deceitful.

But there was always a "warm corner" in Cecils Montgomery's lovely home for him, as she had told him there would be; and he believed that there did not exite in all the world so perfect a household as that in which the "True Aristocrat" reigned supreme, both as a fond and faithful wife and a true and loving mother.

[THE END.]

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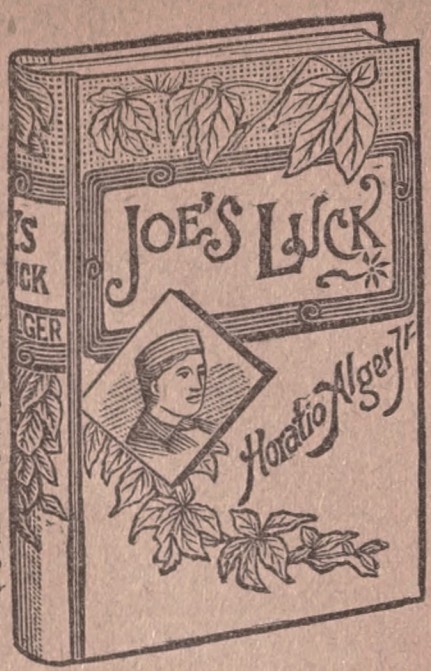

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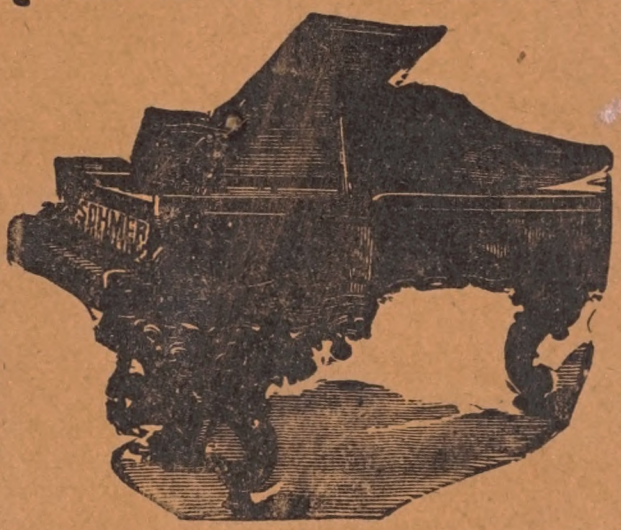

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